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▶ Everything you need to know about the new 3D Metroid

AUG 2002 - **IGN**INSIDER

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Letter from the Editor ::

I may have a pretty cool space helmet, but nothing compares to the untouchable coolness of the new Samus visor. If you don't believe me, just flip back a page and spend a few minutes respecting the sexy body armor and hardcore headgear that adorns this fresh, new IGN Unplugged cover. When you're finished, please return here to my picture and spend a few additional minutes in laughter.

Yes folks, Samus has returned to gaming in a big way with her upcoming space-epic adventure, *Metroid Prime* on Nintendo's GameCube. The editors of IGN have already gone hands-on with this intergalactic fem fatale at this year's big E3 show. Now the time has come time to turn-loose our very own rabid Samus stalker -- one Fran Mirabella III -- to present you with "Everything You Need to Know About Metroid Prime." If you're a Metroid fan, then this in-depth feature shall both satisfy your Metroid cravings and whet your appetite for more – both simultaneously.

But it gets even better. Are there any *EverQuest* fans in the house? Our PC hounds have tracked down the Lead Designer for the upcoming *EverQuest II* and picked his brain clean. Please enjoy the resulting casserole of insider insight regarding one of the most ambitious games ever conceived. Beyond that, you'll also find tons of exclusive previews, features, and even an awesome *Crazy Taxi 3* guide for a little after-dinner treat. And please pay special attention to Matt Casamassina's beautifully crafted GameCube section -- he put great care into every loving word.

See you next month!

-- Cory D. Lewis

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EMAIL OF THE MONTH ::

HELLO THE QUESTION IM GOING TO ASK YOU IS A SIMPLE I WAS CHECK OUT YOUR SITE (ITS REALLY COOL!)AND WANTED TO GET A PC GAME CALLED THE SIMS ONLINE,THEN IT SAID THAT I COULD PRE-ORDER IT. DOES IT MEAN THAT I COULD GET IT NOW EVEN IF THE GAME DIDNT CAME OUT? -- *Lil Cuty DeVil*

FILMFORCE ::
No More Mr. Powers!?
Brian, I was reading your article on *Austin Powers in Goldmember*, and I noticed that it mentioned that this would be the final installment in the Austin Powers franchise. I love the movies and I was wondering why this would be the last one. Is it because of the MGM legal case? Thanks!

– An avid FilmForce reader. Yeah, baby!

Linder responds: Yes, fans of the franchise will be sad to hear that this is the last of the Austin Powers movies. Myers says he has always envisioned the films as a trilogy, but I think he's probably ready to move on to other things. The Canadian comic actor's upcoming slate includes the ensemble romantic comedy A View from the Top, the live-action adaptation of Dr. Seuss's The Cat in the Hat, and voice work for 2004's Shrek sequel.

Believe It of Not, It's Just Me...
I just read on your site that they're making a film based on the 1980's TV show *The Greatest American Hero*. One question: why!? If this comes to fruition, the renaissance of comic book films that we've just entered will be cut tragically short. *The Greatest American Hero* will do to comic book films what Warrant did for heavy metal – kill the genre entirely.

– Tyler

Linder responds: Ty, as much as I loved the series (and the theme song) as a kid, I share your disdain for this project. When parodies like this start popping up, it can spell the end for an industry trend. I hope you're wrong though. With X-Men 2, The Hulk, Daredevil and countless other flicks on the horizon, the future of comic book films looks pretty bright.

DVD ::
Babylon 5 First Season DVD
I was looking around the 'Net and found a reference to *Babylon 5*'s entire first season being released on Nov 5. There was only a date shown, so no features or information about the discs at all. Have you heard anything about this DVD box set?

– Paul

Jeremy responds: Warner hasn't announced the official specs yet, but series creator J. Michael Straczynski has been talking about the set a bit in Usenet posts and has given up some details. Expect commentary on at least two episodes as well as new documentaries that include brand-new interviews with members of the cast.

Ren and Stimpy on DVD?
Any chance we are going to see Ren and Stimpy on DVD?

– Chris

Jeremy responds: If you had asked me this a few months ago, I would have said "no." However, TNT has recently bought the rights to all of the old Ren and Stimpy episodes and will be running them next year along with about six new episodes. So, there is a small chance that the series could see a DVD release, and if it does, then it would probably be from Warner.

GAMECUBE ::
The Pick of the Shooters
Which is better in your opinion: *TimeSplitters 2*, *Perfect Dark 2*, *Turok Evolution*, or *Metroid Prime*? Why?

– darby37

Matt responds: Well, I think we'd first have to start by ruling out Perfect Dark 2, or 0, or whatever Rare is planning on calling it these days. You see, there is no information on the game, no screenshots, and rumors -- even wrong ones -- are hard to come by. I could probably ask a psychic how the game is coming, but I fear that might be frowned upon.

With that out of the running, I'd have to say that my personal favorite currently is Metroid Prime. Why? First of all, it's Metroid. That's actually a fairly legit reason, too, if you've followed the series. Second, developer Retro Studios has just really pulled it together. It's got a super-polished feel to it that very few other titles can lay claim to. Plus, though some will shrug it off as a first-person shooter, it's actually not exactly that, but more of an adventure game in first-person view. Really, it is, I swear. Just look at some of the options. Samus, the heroine of the game, who many ▶

gamers dream of having sex with (including Fran -- have you seen his license plate?), can perform all sorts of nifty moves, from rolling into a ball to upgrading her guns and gadgets, and all of this plays hand-in-hand (pun) with the environments. It's awesome stuff and, believe it or not, controls beautifully in full 3D.

Of course, that's not to say that Turok or TimeSplitters 2 are poor first-person shooters, either. My time with Turok thus far has been fairly brief, but it seems to show a lot of promise. Here's hoping that the final product is not rushed to market though. As for TimeSplitters 2 – I love it. It's fantastically fast and brutal with tons of multiplayer options to boot. You can't really go wrong.

GAME BOY ADVANCE ::
Genesis to the GBA?

The GBA seems to attract a lot of SNES ports, but I was wondering -- why so few ports from other systems (like the Genesis or even TurboGrafx 16)? Many people regard the GBA as a portable Super NES, so the large number of Nintendo games appearing on the handheld seems to make sense at first. But in actuality, the GBA's hardware is quite different than the SNES', perhaps as different as it is from, say, the Genesis hardware. Anyway, why so few ports of classic games from the other 16-bit systems? Porting games from the Genesis, for instance, couldn't be that much harder than porting SNES games, right?

– danders15

Craig responds: : It's definitely not a technical issue, as the Game Boy Advance is a more powerful system than the Genesis, TurboGrafx 16, and even the SNES. It's more a matter of "will this game sell?" I don't think too many people will leap at the chance to play the TurboGrafx's J.J and Jeff or Last Alert on the GBA. The names aren't exactly super recognizable. Then again, Hudson may bring back Bonk. And we'll be

getting a version of R-Type on the system as well. And don't forget about all the Genesis games that Sega's bringing to the system, including Ecco and Golden Axe.

GTA3 in Your Pocket?

I was looking on the Wal-Mart website when I saw something peculiar: GTA 3 for GBA. You haven't said anything about this game. The site had the box art and everything. What's up? Surely this game deserves some attention?

– Nick

Craig responds: : Surely the game does deserve attention, indeed. But you'll need to tell that to Destination Software, who is currently the publisher of the Game Boy Advance version. The game has been announced for at least a year, but the company has yet to release a single screenshot of the game.

GEAR ::
UK WaveBird Worries

I live in England but I am visiting the US right now. My cousin has a GameCube with two WaveBird controllers. I want to buy one, but am concerned about it working with my non-US console. Well???

– Judas O.

Mike responds: : You've nothing to fear. A WaveBird will work with any GameCube, regardless of geographic area.

iPods Making Sweet PC Love

Can I use an iPod with my PC?

– Starla

Mike responds: : Yes. There are actually two ways to make your iPod PC-friendly. Both XPlay and EphPod will do the trick.

PC ::
I Want Seaman

Did Seaman ever come out for the PC? I remember seeing an article for

T-minus Seven Hours?
GAMECUBE ::

In your QA, you said that *Metroid Prime* was only seven hours long. Is that true? **– skirzzytheclown**

Matt responds: : It's difficult to say, really. I had initially received this information from someone within the company, but since that time, other sources have come forth and denied it. Still, everyone working on the project that's spoken with me has reiterated that there has been no clear gameplay length finalized yet. As it stands, the Retro guys are working 12-hour days, six days a week – yes, even Saturday – to finish the game up in approximately three months. The problem, as I hear it, is that new game content is still being added – a fact some team members aren't terribly happy about. I think some members just want to stop adding new content and start polishing everything up for release.

So I've rambled on and on. My point? I don't' know what the ultimate game length will be, and I've got a feeling that neither does Retro Studios at this point.

Meeting an Athlon Powered DOOM
PC ::

I've read some places that DOOM is out the end of this year, and other places say the middle of next year. I was wondering if you knew more or less which one was correct? Also, I have a GeForce 3, Athlon XP 1600+ and 512MB DDR SDRAM. Will I need to upgrade just to play this game? If so, I surely hope only a little. I was already planning on upgrading to a GeForce 4 Ti 4600, but I'd be pretty upset if I have to do some hardcore upgrading. **– Jonathan**

Ivan responds: : DOOM III is tentatively scheduled to release in 2003. Launch by the end of this year is what I scientifically refer to as "laughable." Sadly, nothing more is known than that. id is a "when it's done" kind of development team. The game will ship when they say it will ship. And no, you will not need to first upgrade your machine in order to be able to run through the depths of Phobos lab. But, pricey add-ons will be necessary if you want to enjoy your DOOM for all its worth. This game will be especially resource intensive, and many a .plan update from Carmack himself indicated that the title, when run on similar configurations, needed to be scaled back just to keep it playable. Unfortunately, "playable" to a developer or publisher often translates to "choppy" as far as you and I are concerned.

1.0 and 1.2 versions sometime in 2001, but was that Japan only? Is there any hope here in the States?
– Tom

Ivan responds: : True, back in 2000 it was announced that a PC port of the not-so-popular-but-still-zany-and-innovative Dreamcast Seaman "game," dubbed the V 1.0 iteration, would be coming to the PC in 2001. That didn't so much happen (the game coming, not the year 2001). In fact, it doesn't look like we, in the land of the setting sun, will ever be graced with Seaman splashed across our monitors. Thank goodness, I say. Having to contend with Seaman on my computer every single day would be just a bit too much Seaman for me to digest. Oh grow up!

PLAYSTATION 2 ::
Please Pass the Cheese Wiz...
Hi, I just wanted to say... Naaaa Baaa HAaaaaa HAAAA HAAA NAA NAAA NNAA hOO hoo bAa saA.
– Jim McSpank

Doug responds: Yeah, too many 3DO games for you, pal. Stop the madness. [Ed's Note: Doug, please stop emailing Unplugged questions to yourself.]

Outlaws of the Suikoden
I noticed the suikoden series resembles a Chinese novel, "Outlaws of the Marsh," because the game has 108 characters to use and a lot of the characters resemble heroes in the Chinese novel. If it is based on the novel, why doesn't suikoden base more on the book in terms of plot, characters, and storyline, etc? Since it's obviously adapted from the novel, why don't they just call the game "Outlaws of the Marsh?"
-- Kelly

Doug responds: Good, insightful point. But the game and the novel are both based on an ancient Chinese legend that tells of the uniting of a nation

under the 108 stars of destiny. In fact, there are tons of stories based on this old legend, including anime, manga, movies, and more.

XBOX ::
What's a Millionaire to Do?
Hey guys, I read your site every day, and it has finally come to the point where I want to make my own games. I've got several million dollars to put into a company, but I have no idea where to start. Can someone point me in the right direction?
Thanks for all your help. I knew I could count on you guys!
– nycbrose

Aaron responds: If you've got a million dollars ready to burn into a videogame, then you won't have to look far for partners, developers, or anybody else. There are more videogame ideas out there than there are wealthy investors, so I'd suggest placing an ad in a respected publication and watch all of those great ideas for Super Virtua Monkey Simulator 3: The Rise of the Dead Zombies just come rolling in.

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pocket_mail@ign.com
gear_mail@ign.com

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Retro Studios
Genre: Action-adventure
Players: One
Release Date: November 2002

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT METROID PRIME

By the end of GameCube's first year of life, the console will have seen releases of big Nintendo franchises including Super Smash Bros. Melee, Super Mario Sunshine, Star Fox Adventures, and Metroid Prime. It's a dazzling lineup, complimented by countless other impressive third-party titles, and will surely be remembered as one of the most powerful over GameCube's life span. Undeniably, the biggest star of them all is the Retro Studios developed Metroid Prime. Surely the fan base for the long-running series isn't as big and wide reaching as Nintendo's flagship, Mario, but it does have incredible star power and a group of extremely passionate followers.

So, it goes without saying that Metroid Prime is one of the most anticipated and talked about titles in development for Nintendo GameCube. It's gone from being a vague concept to winning IGN's own Best of Show at this year's E3 2002 with its first playable demonstration. Clearly, Nintendo and Retro Studios are on track with development, and now Metroid Prime is receiving a lot of new attention as it leads up to its planned November 2002 release.

Given the title's draw, we've designed this feature to be "Everything You Need to Know About Metroid Prime." It gives you an in-depth look at its history, unique features, important plot and gameplay details, as well as commentary on a number of miscellaneous topics. Whether you've heard next to nothing about Metroid Prime or feel that you're one of its most informed followers, we think there's plenty to enjoy in this following special.

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"IT'S AN AAA EFFORT THAT PERFECTLY BLENDS ADDICTIVE GAMEPLAY, STYLISH VISUALS, AND OUTSTANDING SOUND DESIGN INTO ONE COHESIVE WORK."

*Above picture of Samus courtesy of EGM

IN THE SUMMER OF 2000... IGN LEARNED AND REPORTED THAT METROID WAS FINALLY IN DEVELOPMENT AGAIN...

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT METROID PRIME

A Galaxy Not At Peace

Nintendo has released the Metroid franchise for nearly every one of its hardware platforms, including the series' 1987 debut on the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), its black and white vacation on the Game Boy, and its most recent release almost a decade ago on the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES). Indeed, it has been a long time since Metroid fans have been privy to a new home console version. With the release of the Nintendo 64 in 1996, many imagined Nintendo would give in and release an all-new Metroid adventure. Years passed, and the N64 became home to a new Mario, Star Fox, and Zelda, but Metroid was nowhere to be found, nor was it on the radarscope. Paranoid fans began clamoring, even demanding, that a sequel be released on the Nintendo 64, but the requests fell on deaf ears. Nintendo had apparently tossed around the idea of developing a Metroid for the Nintendo 64 several times, but it never followed through. Instead, more time passed by, and Metroid-ites became increasingly frustrated and exhausted in their wait. However, relentless fanatics just used the pain Nintendo had caused them as fuel for more demands. This was not the end of the story. Metroid would not be forgotten or left for dead.

Return of the Bounty Hunter

In the summer of 2000, just hours before GameCube was unveiled at Nintendo's Space World show in Tokyo, IGN learned and reported that Metroid was finally in development again, this time by the newly formed second-party Retro Studios. Fans were going to get their wish. Proof of this came via the Space World 2000 press conference in the form of a teaser trailer that featured footage of the yet-to-be-named but in development GameCube software, including Luigi's Mansion, Wave Race: Blue Storm, and Metroid Prime. For Metroid, Nintendo showed a short pre-rendered video clip of the lead heroine Samus running down a small corridor. Chasing her was a horde of tiny, insect-type creatures. As a whole, the art style and theme convinced fans that something great could be on the way.

Nearly a year later at E3 in May of 2001, Nintendo was still not ready to show off the game in playable form, but it did reveal the official name, Metroid Prime, in addition to releasing more concept art and

CREATURE PROFILES

The ability to scan things with your visor opens up a great deal of possibilities and becomes a key feature in deciding the pace of your game. Scanning enemies is certainly one of the more important roles of this function. In the brief E3 demonstration alone, there were probably a dozen or so creatures. This section will provide you with the names and information for a handful of them.

Species: Sova
Description: This larva-like creature is native to Tallon IV. Aesthetically, it seems fairly harmless.

Species: Fireflea
Description: Native to Tallon IV. Suspected to be relatively harmless.

Species: Hard Shelled Metaree
Description: Native to Tallon IV. With two knife-like arms and a thick exoskeleton, it can be a tough close encounter.

Species: Parasitic Larva
Description: These caustic creatures travel in large numbers. They are harmless alone, but evasive action is suggested if you encounter a grouping.

WHILE FANS WERE ENTHUSIASTIC... MOST WERE NOT IMPRESSED WITH THE CHOICE TO SHOW OFF WHAT APPEARED TO BE AN ANCIENT RUINS SETTING

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT METROID PRIME

another teaser trailer. Once again, most of the screens and video were just conceptual, but things looked to be shaping up nicely. In fact, we didn't know it then, but the game was going to look nearly as good in motion.

In the wake of the new art, critics expressed doubts that Metroid Prime was making any progress, and almost as if to strike back and prove them wrong, Nintendo released in-game screenshots just months later at its Tokyo-held Space World 2001 show in August. While fans were enthusiastic to see that Retro Studios was indeed making progress with the title, most were not impressed with the choice to show off what appeared to be an ancient ruins setting. Everything from Samus's odd-looking blaster to the somewhat untraditional atmosphere did little to make a solid first impression.

E3 2002: Proving Grounds

Finally, after two years of rumors regarding Retro Studios' stability and Metroid Prime's uncertain fate as a 2D game gone 3D, Nintendo had enough work completed on the project to bring a fully playable one-level demonstration to the annual Electronics Entertainment Expo. It was more polished and tightly wound than anyone could have ever imagined, thus

CREATURE PROFILES

Species: Unknown: Sidehopper (variation)
Description: An unstable xenothropic life form in solitary holding. Could be a direct descendant or evolved form of the Sidehoppers encountered long ago on Planet Zebes. Unknown Phazon level.

Species: Parasitic Queen
Description: This large creature has gone through a horrible mutation. It is to be considered highly dangerous and is able to project a beam of energy from the back of its throat.

Subject: Ridley
Description: Slave to Mother Brain and the Space Pirates, Ridley has always stood as a lethal guardian to the Metroids. Thought dead, it appears the winged beast has been biomedically augmented with new attack mechanisms including stinger ballistics and a plasma fuel cell. Everything is fully functional. Ridley's exoskeleton has been further improved to shield it from most attacks with a hermetic seal. According to the scan, umbilical retraction is ready to commence.

ALMOST INSTANTANEOUSLY, RETRO STUDIOS WAS BEING HERALDED AS ONE OF NINTENDO'S BEST-KEPT SECRETS

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convincing die-hard Metroid fans that there was much to anticipate. Almost instantaneously, Retro Studios was being heralded as one of Nintendo's best-kept secrets. The team, composed of some of the most talented individuals in this industry, from programming to art design, had done the impossible. In the midst of fighting its way through numerous internal management firestorms, Retro Studios had managed to create a first-person perspective Metroid that was reminiscent of the series' roots, persuading fans that the beloved Nintendo franchise could be on the right track. Indeed, the transition from 2D to 3D was coming along nicely.

The one-level E3 demo was an intentional throwback to the previous Metroids, placing lead heroine Samus on a mysterious space station above a planet called Tallon IV. It introduced players to the controls, while seamlessly presenting some intense battle and escape scenarios. The playable demo begins as Samus docks her ship on what appears to be a deserted and devastated space station. Very much like the previous Metroid titles, there isn't a whole lot of action at first. In fact, the docking area is very wide open and barren of enemies, with only a tall gate standing in the way. This lets players familiarize themselves with the new controls, while also entertaining them with an engaging tutorial. However, it's not long before you encounter some nasty space pirates, access map data, and roll up into ball form to reach new areas. Eventually, you enter a huge room with a shielded cylinder in the center of it; inside, a giant, scorpion-tailed beast lurks and soon begins spitting beams of green energy at you. It's not too difficult to figure out that you need to shoot it, but that's easier said than done, as the shield, which is vertically separated into a few pieces, is rotating quickly around it. It switches directions and changes pace, all while the beast is attacking you. So, once again, the boss fight is a bit of a tutorial, forcing players to evade attacks and manage their blaster.

If you successfully defeat the boss figure, you might think that the end of the level would be a simple stroll out of the nearest exit. Wrong, of course -- the space station will go into self-destruct mode, just like it always does, setting the stage for an intense, timed escape from the complex.

SPACE DEMENTIA
2D VS. 3D

For hardcore Metroid fans, there are some important questions lurking down these new 3D corridors. Why didn't Nintendo keep the series in 2D, and simply upgrade it with some new weaponry, glorious visuals and a stunning soundtrack? Would that not make Metroid fans happy? Certainly.

The series' most dedicated fans would be easily satisfied with a more feature-filled 2D Metroid for GameCube, perhaps even with some 3D backgrounds. However, Nintendo is a company that has a constant desire to push forward game design when possible.

It is already underway with Metroid Fusion, classically styled in 2D for the Game Boy Advance. So, bringing one of its most edgy franchises into 3D, while a major challenge, is exactly the kind of boundary Nintendo is looking to push. Just as it has successfully brought Mario and Zelda into the 3D realm, it intends to give Metroid the same revolutionary makeover.

The task of designing a 3D Metroid is not an easy one, though. Retro Studios and Nintendo have to come up with a way to bring the same

METROID HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY MUCH ABOUT EXPLORATION IN PLATFORM-HEAVY ENVIRONMENTS

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SPACE DEMENTIA
2D VS. 3D

Naturally, you're faced with plenty of obstacles on the way out. It draws direct inspiration from the previous game's escape scenarios, especially as seen in Super Metroid. However, where gamers once had to platform jump up a huge, unstable shaft, in Metroid Prime they will instead be rolling down one in morph ball form. This has no doubt been done because platforming in the first-person perspective is simply far too difficult. Short of admitting defeat to 3D and cutting to an almost nostalgic 2D viewpoint, there aren't a lot of solutions. The good news is that rolling around in ball form is highly entertaining. In the case of this escape, you roll down a series of shafts infested with acidic insect-like creatures. The more body area you have exposed, the worse the damage to your health, so you are forced into a ball to protect yourself. As the creatures spiral down the corridors in what seem to be groups of hundreds, you find yourself panicking in some instances to push yourself into the next area without coming out of ball form. It's hugely different than platforming in concept, but as far as the tension and amusement level goes, it could easily be considered just as effective.

Nintendo representatives on the show floor commented that the level, while just a demo, was very similar to what we'd see in the beginning of the final product. As we were already equipped with the morph ball, an upgraded suit, an ice beam, and a grappling hook, we're positive it won't be identical, but as a demo, it was perfect for showing off Metroid Prime's huge potential as an adventure-shooter.

Controlling Samus

The control scheme for Metroid Prime is very much unlike what you'd imagine for a game that has first-person shooting elements. It doesn't feature a standard dual analog control scheme. Instead, steering yourself around the levels is tied to the left analog stick. To manually aim your gun or look around freely you must hold the R-trigger down. As you would expect from a Nintendo product, though, aiming at objects and enemies has been simplified. By simply clicking the L-trigger, you can cycle through anything targetable in the area. In the aforementioned gate puzzle

(cont.) gameplay that fans cherish so much into a vastly more complicated environment. Originally, Retro wanted to make Metroid a third-person adventure, as it had already been developing a game engine based on that concept. But Nintendo did not have enough confidence in that kind of camera system. So, with somewhat of a heavy heart, Retro Studios pressed on to design a new Metroid: putting Samus gameplay into a first-person perspective for the first time.

While it immediately simplified camera work, it simultaneously created numerous problems for the gameplay design. Metroid has always been very much about exploration in platform-heavy environments. In fact, Metroid on the NES primarily pitted players in tall underground caverns that had them jump vertically from platform to platform. It was the same in Super Metroid on the SNES. Gamers often had to focus all of their concentration on platforming.

Now with Metroid Prime, Retro Studios and Nintendo have had to sacrifice a lot of this element -- at least, for as much as we've seen thus far it's not present. Instead, it

RETRO STUDIOS HAS MADE [SAMUS' VISOR] AN IMPORTANT TOOL, IF NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL

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at the beginning of the E3 demo, you are taught to tap the L-trigger to target several different button-like switches that run up and down poles on the left and right of the gate. It's a very intuitive and handy setup. However, aiming isn't completely dumbed down. If you quickly target the four triggers surrounding the gate, you'll find that it does not open. You have to use the R-trigger to manually look to a higher point where there are two more triggers. So, while aiming and shooting is certainly intuitive, it definitely requires some dexterity. It's possible to strafe when you're locked onto a target or manually aiming, but it's very dissimilar to how a first-person shooter feels overall, which works for the game since exploration is a focus.

The A-button fires your blaster -- tap the button to shoot and hold it down to charge the weapon. If you want to use missiles, you must tap the Y-button to switch to that weapon type. Adding a bit more depth, it's possible to perform a super shot and combine your blaster type with your missiles by simply charging with the A-button and hitting the Y-button in sync. You can also switch your weapon type with the C-stick by pressing in one of the four main directions. This suggests that you'll have to use a suit interface and equip specific weapons and suit types.

One of our favorite buttons, though, is the X-button. Yes, this lovely, gray, bean-shaped button allows gamers to switch into ball form and experience a third-person camera. It's possible to perform the switch at anytime you feel necessary, but your only means of protecting yourself will be evasion and dropping morph bombs with the A-button. You can only lay three bombs at once, but if you time it just right, you'll be able to bounce yourself a second time in mid-air. It's similar to the previous Metroids, but you won't be able to endlessly propel yourself upward -- as far as the first level would have us believe, that is. Last but not least is the B-button, which allows Samus to jump. With that big heavy suit, it's not easy to leap great distances without lessened gravity or a jet pack upgrade, but it is possible to perform small hops. If you press left or right on the analog stick at the same time as B, then you're able to perform a quick sidestep to jump out of the way.

Visor Technology 101

One of the most important tools of Metroid Prime is Samus's visor. It's the interface between the gamer (controlling Samus through her eyes) and the world around them. Retro Studios has made it an important tool, if not the most important of all. In the beginning of the game, the HUD teaches Samus how to use her new equipment. As the player, you'll learn all the controls and gain valuable information about your surroundings. Samus's visor is not a one-trick pony, however. The basic combat visor presents a

SPACE DEMENTIA
2D VS. 3D

(cont.) seems that Metroid Prime will be drawing a lot more attention to the potential of using Samus in morph ball form.

In the one-level demo we played at E3, changing into ball form was a necessity, and other available teaser footage indicates there will be plenty more of this to come.

For example, a later level has Samus changing into ball form to roll up a sequence of magnetic tracks. At the end of the maze-like puzzle, players use the morph ball to turn a crank and raise a platform into place.

Based on this we can optimistically speculate at its potential. Changing into ball form gives players a chance to experience a third-person camera, which is much-needed change of pace. More importantly it has huge prospects for creating entertaining, puzzle-heavy environments.

We simply can't wait to see how Retro Studios exploits the possibilities, which could play a huge role in making Metroid Prime feel compellingly original as a step beyond the previous 2D titles.

THE FIRST-PERSON VIEWPOINT HAS BECOME MUCH MORE THAN JUST A NOVELTY TO AVOID CAMERA PROBLEMS

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT METROID PRIME

health, ammo supply, map data, and more. By choosing one of the four directions on the D-pad, you can choose from several different kinds of visor modes. Very much like weapon choosing, we suspect that you'll be able to set up your available visors.

Besides the basic combat visor, the E3 demonstration only had the scanner available. By switching to this mode, it became possible to target enemies and world objects to access detailed information about them. It

became an integral part of progressing through the level, as you needed to open door locks and deactivate a few things. In one area, you must hack into the system to turn gravity back on. For the most part, scanning enemies seems like a hobby. You can access their species type and a general profile of their body type. However, when you meet up with the first boss, you learn that you have to scan for information, which reveals a weak spot. If you forget to do this, the fight will take you upwards of 10 minutes -- if you manage to survive.

As proven by this demonstration, Retro already has a lot of great ideas regarding Samus's visor. The first-person viewpoint has become much more than just a novelty to avoid camera problems. It's absolutely necessary to have a deep understanding of all the available functions if you hope to solve puzzles and successfully defeat foes. Other miscellaneous footage reveals that there are many more visor modes to come, including infrared, X-ray, night scope, and others. Needless to say, we'd be completely satisfied to pay several visits to the Chozo statues that usually hold your upgrades captive in secret areas.

Priming the Engine

Behind every good game,

DESIGNING THE SOUNDSCAPE

To back up the breathtaking visuals, Metroid Prime needed a combination of cutting-edge sound design and a musical score that would captivate both old and new fans alike.

No doubt seeing the new territory that Factor 5 had broken into with Star Wars Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II at launch, Retro Studios has been in contact with Dolby Laboratories to produce some of the most stunning Dolby Pro Logic II surround sound yet.

Not only do ambient sound effects pan around you to create a rich soundscape, but the quality of each sample is very high as well. It all comes together wonderfully, and of what little we've experienced, we're frothing at the mouth for more.

For example, you can hear Samus's metal boots clanking against steel flooring, creating a tinny echo all throughout the corridor. This changes as you move from environment to environment, blending with different noises to perpetually excite your aural senses.

In the case of the soundtrack,

FROM TIP-TO-TOE-TO-FINGERTIPS...
SAMUS IS MORE DAZZLING IN 3D THAN
WE COULD HAVE EVER IMAGINED

EVERYTHING
YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
METROID
PRIME

there is usually good technology. Sometimes the game engine produces beautiful visuals, ambitious art design, or clever physics. In the case of Metroid Prime, it has the best of all worlds, featuring a fantastic engine that brings the team's visions to life at a slick 60 frames per second. Stunning art design seems to have moved from concept to real-time implementation without a hitch. There's no doubt that the artists at Retro Studios are very talented individuals, and they've been able to achieve moody, multi-faceted environments all thanks to remarkably flexible technology. One of the most impressive aspects of all is Metroid Prime's character rendering. Our sultry heroine Samus is absolutely breathtaking, and easily one of the most detailed models we've ever laid eyes on; jointed metal sheathing encases her hidden body, bending and reflecting light with jaw-dropping realism. The first time you see the camera swing around Samus in a cut-scene, it is inevitable that you stop breathing to momentarily take in all the detail. From tip-to-toe-to-fingertips, with motion capture animation and precision modeling, Samus is more dazzling in 3D than we could have ever imagined.

The detail doesn't end there. The in-game effects are also astonishing with a great deal of attention to detail. The visor effects are fantastic, featuring condensation, pressure cracks, static, and much more. One specific effect reveals a flash of Samus's face on the inside of her visor, which occurs when a close burst of light fills the inside of her helmet to create a reflection. It's something that doesn't affect gameplay, but it's just one of those ultra-cool details that produces an oooh or an ahhh the first time you see it. It's not long before you figure out it's possible to nestle the

DESIGNING THE SOUNDSCAPE

(cont.) we've heard several different things. Long ago it was rumored that Tommy Tallarico, an industry veteran, was working on the soundtrack. We even heard that Retro Studios and Nintendo had contacted some experimental techno bands to produce a few test tracks.

As far as we can tell, Tallarico and these other bands were intended to be included on the soundtrack, but at E3 another composers name surfaced -- Kenji Yamamoto, the original composer for the Super Metroid soundtrack, which is still regarded as one of the best scores in any videogame.

Apparently Yamamoto is busy back at Nintendo's Japanese headquarters composing a large portion of the soundtrack, if not all of it. The tracks heard in the E3 demonstration were a blend of nostalgic Metroid themes and brand-new industrial, techno inspiration.

Taking this into consideration, we expect the Metroid Prime score to be home to a mix of orchestra-quality compositions and synthesized experimental effects.

THUS FAR, EVERYTHING WE'VE SEEN INDICATES THAT METROID PRIME WILL BE A TRIPLE A PRODUCT

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT METROID PRIME

of your blaster up against a wall and fire off a charge blast to reproduce the effect -- it quickly becomes a bit of an unhealthy addiction for hardcore Metroid fans.

Last, but certainly not least, the physics and rules behind the gameplay are equally tight. It's very easy to take for granted how the environment reacts to what you do, or just how a game feels. Mario, for instance, is renowned for his age-old sense of momentum and friction with everything he walks on -- it just feels right and ultimately adds to the gameplay. Once again, Metroid Prime spares nothing for all the subtle details and the sensitivity between the gamer and the actual game. Fire off your blaster to see a trail of particles drift off behind it, or watch as it hits the wall to produce a quickly fading glow. As you stomp down the tight corridors it really feels like you're walking inside of a metal suit, not just hovering along as if there's no gravity in the world. Above all though, when you transform into the morph ball, the physics shine through and feel incredibly realistic; momentum, gravity, and friction all come together perfectly, making rolling around addictive and nearly a preferred way to play. In the playable demo you have to roll your way through a series of downward tunnels, and you find yourself rocking the ball back and forth to gain momentum. Later in the game, players will have to draw upon the advanced physics to ramp themselves out of deep canyons or up into secret passages.

Indeed, the programmers and software engineers at Retro Studios are very talented. Only the most experienced and proven individuals in the industry were offered jobs, and even then, many didn't make it in. After a series of layoffs, it's difficult to discern who's left at the company, but it's clear that only the cream of the crop can be left working on Metroid Prime. One individual we are aware of is Senior Programmer David "Zoid" Kirsch of ex-id Software fame, who is responsible for implementing the bulk of the impressive engine work. While his former employer, John Carmack, is busy pushing the visual boundaries for id's upcoming graphical stunner, Doom III (PC), Zoid is spending day and night taking the GameCube hardware to its limits, making Metroid Prime as visually dazzling and tightly wound as it possibly can be.

DESIGNING THE SOUNDSCAPE

(cont.) Certainly, if what little we've heard is an indication of things to come, Metroid Prime is positioned to be one of the best sounding GameCube titles yet.

The Release from Captivity

At the closing of 2002, in November, Metroid Prime is scheduled for its grandiose release to the public. Already highly polished for its playable May 2002 debut, we can only dream what an additional six months of hard work will yield. Thus far, everything we've seen indicates that Metroid Prime will be a triple A product. The biggest question mark is whether or not it will truly feel like an advanced 3D sequel that does the Metroid legacy justice. As we've noted, the focus on using the morph ball and visors in combination with heavy first-person exploration seems like the right formula, but the game still has a lot to prove. For now, Metroid fans and GameCube owners alike will have to wait with their fingers crossed. ■

EVERQUEST II

Lead Designer Bill Trost fills us in on the upcoming sequel.

Sony's not stupid. Like most good companies, they know a good thing when they see one. Case in point: *EverQuest*. Developed by Sony Online entertainment (SOE), *EverQuest* is by far one of the most popular and successful of the new massively-multiplayer on-line games. Spawning a host of imitators and a seemingly endless series of expansion packs, *EverQuest* is one of the biggest cash cows in the business. And while periodic upgrades in the form of boxed-expansions has helped sustain interest in the title, SOE is finally hard at work on a full sequel to the game.

We recently had a chance to sit down and talk with Bill Trost, Lead Designer of *EverQuest* and *EverQuest 2*, to talk about how the new game will preserve the strengths of the existing game while bringing new features to the table.

IGNPC: *What's the most exciting thing about working on EverQuest 2?*

Bill Trost: Being able to take all that we've learned over the last couple of years and kind of start from scratch. That's the most exciting part of it. We've learned a lot and we're able to have better ideas how these games behave once you get that many people beating on them. That's the most exciting part – redesigning all the mechanics and trying to still have that same kind of visceral flavor that *EverQuest* has.

IGNPC: *What does that mean in specific terms? Can you give us an example of a lesson you've learned?*

Bill Trost: The biggest thing is focusing on making the game accessible to a lot of people. There are a lot more people who've played *EverQuest* and don't play it right now than are still playing *EverQuest*. Our numbers are still at all-time highs but the game has been out for three years.

I think there's a lot in the game that's initially intimidating and a lot of things that, through our technological naiveté the first time around, we didn't address. Our learning curve in *EverQuest* is pretty high. We didn't expect people to spend the ungodly amount of hours they spend at a single sitting. We're

EverQuest II
Interview with Bill Trost

really trying to address those issues so that anybody can get in, play the game for however long they have, and feel like they've accomplished something at the end of their play session, whether it's half-an-hour, two hours or an eight-hour marathon.

IGNPC: *How do you plan for that? How do you create content that works for momentary players as well as the marathon player?*

Bill Trost: It's really just breaking everything down so that it's consumable in two-hour chunks. So the eight-hour guy is consuming four chunks, while the two-hour guy might only get through one. With everything from the layout of the world and the level progression across the world, we have a much clearer idea how people actually play these games.

We're able to more accurately balance the content across the levels. There are a lot of level ranges in *EverQuest* where it feels like you're in a dead zone -- where you feel the experience grind. We're really addressing that too, so that there's constantly stuff to do and you're constantly entertained throughout the whole process. We're hoping to avoid these long areas of just killing over and over again in the same spot.

IGNPC: *How do you balance the need to keep the game familiar with the need to innovate?*

Bill Trost: The core gameplay is still focused around small group cooperative adventuring. We feel that's the most important thing to maintain as far as *EverQuest* goes. As far as the content, we're keeping a lot of the settings very familiar. It's set on Norrath in the future, so you're still going to see a lot of familiar areas and stuff. We plan on putting all the familiar player races and classes in, but we're also expanding that quite a bit. We have a branching class structure this time around.

IGNPC: *So is the new world substantially the same? In what ways is it different?*

Bill Trost: As far as major geographical areas, it's substantially the same. All the major areas are still around -- all the starting cities, for example. But each one is changed quite dramatically, both just because technology allows us to do a lot more and because we're building on

the story line as well. The Age of Destiny is set in the future, so that we can have these kinds of dramatic geographical as well as political structure changes within the world of Norrath.

IGNPC: *Past the fact that the new game looks a lot better, what's the first thing current EverQuest players will probably notice about the world?*

Bill Trost: I'm hoping that they're going to feel like they know what they're supposed to do -- that they're going to come in and immediately feel like they're part of the world and that they have a mission to accomplish. That they're not aliens to this world. The game is going to come to them a lot more. In *EverQuest*, they've really got to go and seek out the game. As soon as you come in, the game is going to come to you and present you with exciting and interesting things to do.

IGNPC: *And this idea of accessibility and understanding carries over to the interface?*

Bill Trost: A game like *EverQuest*, as you can see on *EverQuest Live* right now, requires an incredibly complex interface to display the amount of information that a game like this requires the player have access to. We're really building on what they're doing and what the Star Wars team is doing. All of our games are really building upon a central code base of UI, focusing on customizability and the ability of the interface to grow with the user. You present all the basic commands that a newbie will need to know, and then, through play, reveal more and more of the interface, and then allow users to customize it. In the end, the interface that a warrior will want to use is very different from one that a spell caster will want to use. So we're really taking that in to account when designing the interface.

IGNPC: *Which means you can translate the interface to other games. Getting back to the concept of interacting with the world, what sort of things can the players do to affect the game?*

Bill Trost: That desire for that kind of completely dynamic content is still beyond our reach, as far as the results of a player's quest on how the political structure of the world

EVERQUEST II
Interview with Bill Trost

works or the availability of certain types of content. Maybe certain dungeons or certain quests are only available if players commit to a certain course of action and maintain that course of action and never back down.

A good example and I don't want to get into a specific one that we're actually using, would be a town that's trying to build a temple in the wilderness. And there are quests available that advance that agenda and other quests that negate that agenda. If that temple is completed, it gives a real benefit to players to have that thing there. So you'll have give or take both ways in that, on various servers, depending on whether players are interested in that quest or not, that temple will either be there or it won't.

IGNPC: *Doesn't that create problems in terms of balancing? If the environments on one of the servers start to differ, the rules that apply to the others might not work in that one.*

Bill Trost: It does, but the overall balance of the world will be there, assuming that it is always there. If there is a server where players are more motivated and see the benefit of that and are more capable of actually reaping that benefit, I think that's just part of the game.

IGNPC: *You mentioned that a player could change the relationship of themselves and a certain political. Could they change a faction's relationships to other players or other factions?*

Bill Trost: It's more like a bunch of players are doing something for a specific group, and that group's power grows, and all the players who are allied with that group receive a benefit based on that. It's definitely a more community-focused thing than a purely selfish one. Like the *EverQuest* factions are pretty much focused just on you. This is you and everybody *like* you.

IGNPC: *It seems more conflict oriented -- spurring the players to compete outside of the standard PVP option. Are you still including the standard player-versus-player models?*

Bill Trost: Yeah, as far as on the "blue" servers? We're still restricting it to servers and on the blue servers we'll still have duels, guild wars, and arenas. We have an entire

system dedicated to arena combat, and that'll be a much richer environment. We really want to focus on the towns as places where people can go for meaningful events that advance their character. There's motivation to participate in the event, as well as to spectate.

IGNPC: *And you've also added a new non-combat class, the tradesman. What's the reasoning behind the addition?*

Bill Trost: We felt that there are a percentage of players who don't want to kill monsters and are completely in it for the social aspects. They want to role-play the merchant who doesn't slay dragons. We want them to have a method to advance and feel rewarded by doing what they like to do and not forcing them into situations that they might not enjoy, like going out adventuring. It also creates an interesting interdependence between that type of class and the adventuring classes. We're really focusing on that. The adventurers need these tradesmen, and vice versa.

IGNPC: *Yeah, in Asheron's Call 2, they're doing away with NPC vendors all together and relying strictly on player-run economy. Do you think that's an ideal that most developers ought to be striving for?*

Bill Trost: It's always better to have players provide a function than an NPC. A player's always more interesting than the most advanced AI that you have. If you can have players perform those roles, it's always better.

EverQuest II

Interview with Bill Trost

IGNPC: *That's less work for you guys as well, in some ways.*

Bill Trost: Right. But at the same time, you can't depend on players always being there to provide a service. You have to have a fallback for the guys who are playing at 4 in the morning and there are no tradesmen on. You can't have their ability to play the game hindered because some other person isn't playing at that time. It's a juggling act.

IGNPC: *Do you think it's much of a risk in your case?*

Bill Trost: We view the whole tradesman branch as a risk. We have contingency plans if, once we get it into play, it doesn't pan out. But we think it's a risk worth taking.

IGNPC: *Tell us about the branching class structure. There are lots more classes to choose from this time around, right?*

Bill Trost: We wanted to have wider variety of classes in *EverQuest 2* overall. So that was the initial goal. But we

can't really expect somebody just coming into the game to choosing between 36 classes. That's too much information to ask someone who's never played a game before to sift through all this stuff. It's pretty obvious, and we felt confident that we could present enough information that

players could tell the difference between a human and a troll. You can hold a human and a troll up next to each other and pretty easily convey the differences, even to a complete newbie, what they are.

So the idea is that, at the beginning, we present them with very limited information so that they can feel confident in making a decision. Then, incrementally through the first several levels of play, at various stages, we're easing them up. At any given point, they're only asked to choose between five or six things at a time. They can really weigh the decision, and we're even going to give them a chance to try out some of the different options before they commit to a decision, so that they're able to make a choice that fits their particular play style. A lot of people didn't really find a character they like until their fifth character. There's a percentage of people who never make it to that fifth character, because they get frustrated before that time. I can understand that. We want to try to eliminate any frustrations like that.

IGNPC: *So how does the class tree work?*

Bill Trost: It's set up in four stages. The first one, we're calling citizen or commoner -- something like that. I'm not exactly sure what that title is; we haven't reached a conclusion. Nobody wants to be common.

The next is the archetype stage. You're choosing between a tradesman, a rogue, a mage, a priest, and a fighter. They're the standard D&D types, with the exception of the tradesman. That's at like level six.

EverQuest II
Interview with Bill Trost

ORC WARHELMS

Then at some advanced level, it's a class division, and you're getting more specialized. Along the fighter path, you would go from a fighter to a warrior, crusader, or brawler. At that point, if someone's already going down the fighter path, all you have to teach them is the difference between those three things.

If you go further down the crusader path, at a later level you would hit Paladin, Shadow Knight, and Ranger, which are all priestly warriors.

IGNPC: *And those are a bit like the existing classes in the game?*

Bill Trost: Yeah, and all this information will be available. The entire tree structure will be viewable in the game. If you have a knowledgeable player that's played a Shadow Knight up to level 60 in *EverQuest* and they *know* they want to be a Shadow Knight, then we show them the road.

IGNPC: *Why is there no character migration?*

Bill Trost: The structure of the game is radically different. All the data structures and all of the mechanics are completely new.

IGNPC: *Well everyone already knows what you're doing in terms of graphics. What are you doing from a server side?*

Bill Trost: We're sticking with what we did right. We're sticking with a zone-based architecture, multiple iterations of the world. This keeps the populations relatively small in each world so you can build a sense of community. After about 5000 people it starts to get anonymous, which is not necessarily desirable.
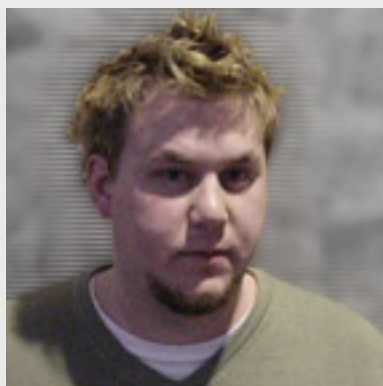
IGNPC: *Anything you'd like to add?*

Bill Trost: We're all excited to be working on *EQ2* and look forward to people playing. We look forward to playing it ourselves. We're still a ways out.

IGNPC: *Awesome. Thanks for your time, Bill.*

– Steve Butts, IGN PC

Matt Casamassina

This Month in GameCube ::

Wow. I think I've somehow managed to beat all of my previous Unforgivably Past Deadline achievements with this month's edition of Unplugged. Please, save your applause. I will not have it.

As a result, I've been made to suffer through the wrath of one Cory D. Lewis, editor extraordinaire, and I have decided that the readers of this month's magazine must therefore suffer, too. It's with this thought etched deeply in my contaminated brain that I compiled some very lovely previews of some of the games that you might otherwise have never known were on the way. I like to think of it as broadening some mental horizons. You can thank me later.

Since I have some free space, I would also like to note that I believe Fran Mirabella to be a fancy lad. I am convinced that he would make a fine character addition to the gone, but hardly forgotten, television sitcom, *Silver Spoons*. Imagine him, sitting alongside Alfonso and taking in the toy train set featured in the opening. If he has a calling, I'm positive that's it.

Thank you.

For more Cube news, reviews, previews, and more, visit **http://cube.ign.com.**

Featured Preview ::
022 :: Mary-Kate and Ashley Sweet 16

Also In This Issue ::
023 :: Preview: Aquaman: Battle for Atlantis
024 :: Preview: Starsky and Hutch

Aquaman: Battle for Atlantis
Underwater freak "super hero" swims to GameCube.

Starsky and Hutch
The 70s super cops prepare to solve crimes in the new millennium.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Metroid Prime

2 :: Legend of Zelda

3 :: Too Human

4 :: Factor 5 Project

5 :: Dead to Rights

Office Abuse ::
In some languages, the name Matt Casamassina translates literally to broken bowels.

gamecube :: preview

GameCube :: Preview

MARY-KATE AND ASHLEY SWEET 16

Just two more years.

From Full House to full blouse, we've watched as the Mary-Kate and Ashley twins have grown up. We have, in fact, often counted the days, marked off the hours, and sadistically smiled with each of their birthdays, privately praying for them to turn eighteen years of age. Uh, or, we think that's what everyone has done. We certainly have.

Great news. The girls have turned 16, and to celebrate, the folks at Acclaim Entertainment have teamed up with developer N-Space to bring GameCube owners all of the excitement and subsequent passion of this event as a full-blown, wondrous videogame. *Mary Kate and Ashley's Sweet 16*, scheduled to ship for your lovable console this October, follows the exploits of the twins as they turn into magnificent young women -- a thought that gives us goose bumps.

The title is more or less a party game, complete with "party graphics" -- a term that basically means not terribly detailed and also one that we plan to trademark, so don't get any ideas. Players take control of the girls through various pants-wetting scenarios presented in a classic, laid-back Mario Party-esque style. MK&A, as we like to call them, will have to take on such epic quests as acquiring their driver's license before they can cruise the streets, the beach, the drive in, or even take their beautiful ride for a car wash -- all possibilities within the confines of the game.

Sound good? There's more. A number of mini-games are on-hand that give Mario and friends a run for their money. Imagine your delight when you manipulate Mary-Kate through a series of rock-climbing events, sweat glistening to her neatly developing body and -- uh, whoa. Sorry. Sometimes we get a little carried away with our own fantasies. But indeed, there's plenty to fantasize about. There are also jet skiing, surfing, ATV quad racing, and fashion-based mini-games, in addition to a whole bunch more where those came from, according to Acclaim.

In order to keep the action fresh, Acclaim has also included what it calls party points, which can be collected for various in-game upgrades, from a more decked-out car to the ability to unlock some super-cool tunes, new clothing for the girls, a more pumped up car stereo, and more.

As we noted, unlike the actual twins, the graphics aren't the prettiest we've ever seen. However, that's not to say that Acclaim and N-Space are totally slacking either. Everything runs in full 3D with proper polygon models and such, and the game twins do resemble their lovely real life counterparts, which makes this title a must have, so far as we're concerned.

You'll only have a couple of more months to wait to nab this one, but in the meantime, feast your eyes on the first screenshots from the GCN version of the title.

-- Matt Casamassina ■
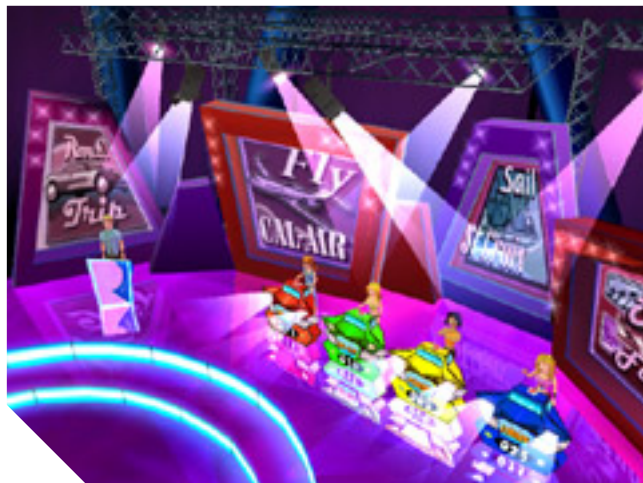
Details ::

Publisher ::	Acclaim Entertainment
Developer ::	N-Space
Genre ::	Girly
# of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	October 2002

GameCube :: Preview

AQUAMAN: BATTLE FOR ATLANTIS

Underwater freak "super hero" swims to GameCube.

Aquaman, the redheaded stepchild of super heroes, has long waited in his underwater lair, pouting, perhaps crying, to some daystar in his own videogame. But for years, his calls for recognition have gone unanswered, partially because they are gargled and choked by mouthfuls of water, but also because he has come to be known as something of a side-show freak hero. Really, more of a leftover in tights than a true Superman or Spider-Man.

But our perception of Aquaman could be about to change, for publisher TDK Mediactive and development studio Lucky Chicken Games are finally giving the mermaidian half-man his wish. Cue *Aquaman: Battle for Atlantis*, a 3D action-adventure set to the backdrop of Aquaman's primitive, but strangely enticing, existence. The title, which is being called an "action-adventure brawler" by its creators, looks to take some inspiration from some of the Kemco-produced side-scrolling efforts of past, except updated for the next-generation of gamers. Players control Aquaman, who must make his way through a multitude of underwater worlds, beating off bad guys and such archenemies as Ocean Master, Black Manta and the Lava Lord of the Fire Trolls. You would think Aquaman could simply put the Lord of the Fire trolls out with a couple well-placed splashes, but apparently this is not the case.

Instead, Aquaman, who was incidentally raised by dolphins to become the King of Atlantis, must rely on his cybernetic morphing hook/hand to defeat his foes. He can also call upon other powers, including his ability to -- duh -- breath underwater and his warped mind communications with sea creatures barely more developed than himself.

Judging from screenshots of the title in action, *Aquaman* features several different gameplay styles, from standard side-to-side scrolling to true 3D environments to explore, and even a selection of levels in which gamers must pilot an underwater craft and target various obstacles and enemies. The game is expected to provide a simple, but intuitive control scheme.

Visually speaking, *Aquaman* actually doesn't look half bad. Developer Lucky Chicken Games has realized some impressively ambient underwater locales and some of the character models look decent enough, though the company obviously could not improve upon Aquaman's hideous costume.

Will it topple the Spider-Mans and Batmans of the videogame universe? Perhaps not. But Aquaman is used to playing second fiddle, so that's all right. Still, it could

very well deliver a worthy comic book competitor, and if so, gamers may finally accept the underwater hero into their hearts. *– Matt Casamassina* ■

Details ::

Publisher ::	TDK Mediactive
Developer ::	Lucky Chicken Games
Genre ::	Action
# of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	November 2002

GameCube :: Preview

STARSKY AND HUTCH

The 70s super cops prepare to solve crimes in the new millennium.

When you think of amazing, quality television, you don't think of HBO's *The Sopranos* or *Six Feet Under*. Nor do you think of NBC's zany line-up of sitcoms, or Fox's latest reality show. No, only two names come to mind: Starsky and Hutch. We don't have a very tangible grasp on reality, mind you, but as we remember it, when S&H first appeared on ABC back in 1975, it triggered a ratings reaction the equivalent of dropping a nuclear bomb in your lap. Indeed, millions of God-fearing Americans lined up in the streets for the chance to see the latest episode of the buddy-cop duo in action. Thousands were killed, in fact, during the fateful "Huggy Bear Riot of '76," an event that is sure to go down in infamy, but that is another story entirely.

Detectives Dave Starsky and Ken Hutchinson seemed, on the outside, to be the most unlikely match. One was a careless, street-smart detective who wasn't afraid to deliver the beatdown when necessary, while the other was well educated, health-obsessed, and soft-spoken. Yet the two mixed it up from the start, and television audiences fell in love with the crime fighters just as quickly. Bending the rules ever so slightly to get the job done, the duo came into contact with a barrage of memorable characters, including the lovable Huggy Bear -- a half-pimp, half-informant. But it was probably the team's wondrous bright red 1974 Ford Torino burning rubber and skidding around corners that fans remember most.

Even as Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson are in production with a movie version of *Starsky and Hutch*, various videogame incarnations of the classic series are also underway. Publisher Empire Interactive and developer

Mind's Eye will bring the duo to Nintendo's next-generation console early next year. The title, which features a "mission-based driving structure," according to its creator, will take gamers through 25 huge 3D levels based on memorable locales from the series including the Bay City that the two ruled with an air of unequaled coolness. It will also span some 25 miles for players to explore. The companies also hope to deliver a simultaneous two-player mode, in which one gamer can drive and the other can shoot, but it is not yet known if this feature will make it into the final version.

So far, Empire has only released some conceptual images of what the final product will look like, but we can ascertain that the developer is going for the full look and feel of the show, complete with big city landscapes, lots of hilly streets to explore, and the famous muscle cars that helped sustain for four years. Think Interstate 76 meets Grand Theft Auto, and you've got the graphic style in a nutshell -- a good thing, we think. -- *Matt Casamassina* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Empire Interactive
Developer ::	Mind's Eye
Genre ::	Car combat
# of Players ::	2
Release Date ::	March 2003

xbox :: *index*

Aaron Boulding

This Month in Xbox ::

One of the little ironies about making our way through the summer months is the number of sports games that come floating through the office. On Xbox alone, we've been putting major time into all of the pigskin offerings from EA (*Madden 2003*, *NCAA Football 2003*) and Sega Sports (*NFL 2K3*, *NCAA Football 2K3*). Sure, they're all football titles, but they're still four distinct games. Throw Microsoft's own *NFL Fever 2003* into the mix with Xbox Live compatibility, and you're talking about hog heaven.

The tough part (or is it the greatest part?) is that, as soon as we've got the football madness under control, the NBA and NHL games come rolling in to keep us athletically inclined right up until the big holiday push of AAA titles. Sure, we're fired up about the great games that will hit just before Christmas like *Blinx* and *Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance*, but it seems we'll have to sweat it out first and power our way through a giant crop of outstanding sports titles (EA's *NCAA Football 2003* makes one hell of a debut on the 'box) to reach that ultimate goal. We're not exactly complaining, just proving that, by the time the holiday review crunch hits, we'll be grizzled veterans, not green rookies.

For more Xbox news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
http://xbox.ign.com.

Featured Preview ::

Also In This Issue ::

Preview: NFL Blitz
Midway's NFL-themed football title is once again, the very definition of over-the-top.

Inside the Minigames of Hitz 20-03
The games within the game put all of your NHL skills to the test.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Splinter Cell
2 :: Midtown Madness 3
3 :: BC
4 :: DoA Xtreme Beach Volleyball
5 :: Dave Mirra BMX XXX

Office Abuse ::
Lately, Aaron has been enjoying some late night rounds of WarCraft III after hours. He needs the practice.

Xbox :: Preview
SHENMUE 2
Ryo journeys to Hong Kong and we tag along for the ride.

Shenmue 2 is a bit of an odd title. It was never released in the US, but it's been out in Japan and Europe over eight months. Many fans of the series imported the European version of *Shenmue 2*, so when the game hits Xbox this November, it may not make as big a splash as some hopes. This isn't to say the game's bad, however, because *Shenmue 2* is a solid RPG. Anyone who hasn't played the sequel (or the original for that matter) will benefit from picking up the title this holiday.

Shenmue 2 continues the tale of Ryo, a young Japanese man having a Tom Cruise identity crisis (he wears a Top Gun-ish bomber jacket). In the first *Shenmue*, Ryo's father was killed by the mysterious and powerful Lan Di. Turns out ol' Lan Di wasn't just some guy who went around killing folks parents. He actually has a plan, a sinister one that may bring the end of the world. Bummer, eh? As *Shenmue* ends, Ryo hops a boat for Hong Kong in search of answers and sailors. But mostly answers.

Shenmue 2 on Xbox hasn't seen much of a change from its DC brother. Though the graphics have received some minor tweaks, the current build doesn't appear to be too much of an improvement. Probably more interesting will be seeing how sound will be utilized in the newer version. With the ability for 5.1 Dolby Surround Sound, the Xbox version could have some great ambient sounds. While the European DC version of *Shenmue 2* was dubbed in Japanese with English subtitles, it's unclear if the American version will get the full vocal treatment. Though, judging by the majority of bad English dubs, it may be best if this beauty is left in its original Japanese.

This is still an early build, and Microsoft has been quite hush-hush on the title, though it is apparent there won't be too much done in the way of improvements. The story will remain the same and the familiar combat system and quick time events (QTEs) will stay intact as well. Anyone who's played the first is in for a treat, as *Shenmue 2* is much more action-oriented with a lot more QTEs and fist fights. And what exactly is a QTE? Quick Time Events are scripted action sequences that require quick button presses as commands pop on screen. How quickly you react will affect what happens on screen. Think *Dragon's Lair* but fast and not quite so devastatingly painful to fail.

We've only seen the E3 build, and there are a lot of months left to improve the game, so we'll keep our fingers crossed that *Shenmue 2* can improve on an already solid game. *– Hilary Goldstein* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Sega
Developer ::	AM2
Genre ::	RPG
# of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	November 1, 2002

Xbox :: Preview
NFL BLITZ

Midway's NFL-themed football title is once again, the very definition of over-the-top.

Once upon a time, Midway's *NFL Blitz* franchise sold enough copies on home videogame consoles, that every other football videogame series stumbled over themselves trying to include more outrageous arcade elements. Whether it was *Madden 2000*'s ill-fated arcade mode or the old *Quarterback Club*'s create-a-juke button, the impact of *Blitz*' brand of super-violent, super-aggressive football was felt across the gaming world. Now in 2002, the only place you can find true arcade football action is in Midway's very own *NFL Blitz 2003*.

• Officially Licensed by the NFL and NFL PLAYERS INC -- includes all of your favorite NFL teams, players, and stadiums
• Over-the-Top, Adrenaline-Style Gameplay -- players leap, soar, dive for passes, stiff-arm, bulldoze, and railroad would-be defenders, while precision-passing quarterbacks throw darts, bullets, and bombs
• Create-a-Player Mode -- customize your own player down to the height, weight, position -- even gear
• All New Fantasy Stadiums -- experience locations never before seen in a licensed NFL videogame
• NFL Accuracy-- updated rosters, schedules and uniforms with the addition of the Houston Texans
• Improved Controls -- more intuitive, fast-action adrenaline-style controls
• Improved Player Models -- bulging muscles and real player faces bring the NFL up close
• Dynamic Camera Angles -- catch all of the deep crossing routes, monster sticks and late hits
• Two-Man Booth -- high-powered play-by-play and color commentary to describe all the action
• Explosive Soundtrack -- licensed music from major bands, plus outrageous sound effects

The black sheep of the football videogame family returns this fall with all new fantasy stadiums, new player models, and more of the same great animations, sound effects, and commentary that made *Blitz* such a hit to begin with. For the gamer that can't resist sitting on the sidelines watching the action, the all new create-a-player mode will give you everything you need to build the *NFL Blitz* version of yourself.

The football purist will probably recognize the crazy moves in *Blitz* from those NFL Films Football Follies features. Brett Favre, Emmit Smith and Tim Brown don't do many piledrivers and clotheslines on the field these days, but the development team over at Midway has built *Blitz* into the football franchise it is, precisely because of those excessive moves.

When *Blitz* made the move to 8-on-8 a few years back, that only made the playbook a menu of silliness waiting to happen. The tip drill rarely yields as much excitement as all of the batted and tipped footballs in *Blitz* where two or three turnovers on one play is not only common, but encouraged. The addition of the "playmaker" on offense was a nice touch as well, since gamers will basically have freelance receiver who has no set route or task from one play to the next. He'll always be conveniently located on the black button, making him the perfect safety outlet.
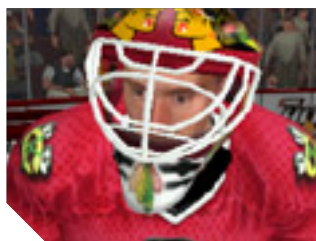
-- Aaron Boulding ■

Details ::

Publisher ::	Midway
Developer ::	Midway
Genre ::	Sports
# of Players ::	1-4
Release Date ::	Fall 2002

Xbox :: Preview
INSIDE THE MINIGAMES OF NHL HITZ 20-03
The games within the game put all of your NHL skills to the test.

If the multiplayer fun of *NHL Hitz 20-03* just can't keep you and your buddies entrenched in front of the television, then the nice lineup of minigames might be just what you need. They all require skills that you need in the main game like shooting, passing and checking, but it's all done up in the wackiest way possible with aliens, dinosaurs, and moose handling the action. Check 'em out.

THREE IN A ROW
This is your basic game of tick tac toe, where you and an opponent take turns blasting slapshots at a game board trying to hit three targets in a row. The catch is that you can block your opponent's shot by guessing where they're going to shoot next and inputting the same analog stick and button command at the same time. Also, claiming a square as either X or O is no guarantee, since your opponent can turn your mark into his own just by shooting at it.

OWN THE ICE
This one is King of the Hill – minus the hills. Simply skate over one of five sections on the ice with the puck in your possession, and it's yours. The winner is the first one to convert all five areas into their own color. Poke checking and stickhandling skills will see you through this one.

KING OF THE RINK
Put four hockey players in a corral, a round one at that and award points for the most vicious checks. They should have this one at next year's All-Star game. The bigger the check, the more points you get in this free for all. Checking opponents over the railing gets you even more.

KEEP AWAY
You'll need to see all angles in this minigame that will teach you quick passing skills. It's two on two, and all you have to do is keep passing the puck back and forth with your teammate. Simply possessing the puck isn't enough; you've got to risk it by passing to your teammate. Skate around, use turbo, and create passing lanes to keep things popping.

SHOOTOUT
Soccer fans will recognize this one. Players get five chances to score one on one against the opposing goalie. Outscore the other guy, and you win, but this one is way more difficult than it looks.

SHOOTING GALLERY
This minigame applies all of your hockey skills since you have to pass, check, and shoot to be successful. It's a two on two on the roof of a building. The object is to shoot out as many windows on a building just across the street before time runs out. You have to get the puck, get as close to the target building as possible, and fire away with slapshots. Nice and frantic.

– Aaron Boulding ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Midway
Developer ::	Midway
Genre ::	Sports
# of Players ::	1-4
Release Date ::	Fall 2002

playstation 2 :: *index*

Doug Perry

This Month in PS2 ::

When Dave Zdyrko left last January, we had an interesting conversation. He was convinced that this year's lineup simply wouldn't be as good as last year's lineup, and I argued that you never can tell -- that perhaps this year would be even better. *Virtua Fighter 4*, *Tekken 4*, *Stuntman*, *Wipeout Fusion*, *Xenosaga*, *Soul Calibur 2*, and a slew of other great games would be coming out. It's an excellent topic for debate, really, seeing as how many blockbusters hit retail shelves within weeks of another last year and how many are now slated for 2002.

What I was counting on wasn't the games that were announced but the games that hadn't been announced. Games such as *The Mark of Kri*, *Sly Cooper*, *Aggressive Inline*, *True Crimes: Streets LA*, *Shinobi*, etc. I guess that's not really a fair argument, but life is unpredictable, and the game industry is even more so. This year's slate of games is going to be AAA quality, and following on the heels of the fall 2001, that's saying something.

For PS2 news, reviews, previews and more visit **http://ps2.ign.com.**

Featured Preview ::

Also In This Issue ::

Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2
No-footed hang-ten to whiplash to backside undertaker? Wow...

Grandia Xtreme
An RPG that doesn't beat around the bush -- rather rare these days.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: The Mark of Kri

2 :: Colin McRae Rally 3

3 :: Shinobi

4 :: TimeSplitters 2

5 :: Alter Echo

Office Abuse ::
Doug Perry forgets a lot of stuff when he doesn't sleep, like how to spell *Thiefius Raccoonacannibus* and *Arrrgheiz.*

PlayStation 2 :: Preview
CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER
The series that started them all comes to PS2.

Years ago, before the advent of ultra-powerful DVD-ROM based video mega systems, and proceeding the era of mainstream advertising blitzes, the most important asset a player would search for was gameplay. While interesting ideas and snazzy visuals were just as influential as they are now, the need for something that was downright fun, superseded all other qualities. Konami's Contra series was the embodiment of old-school gaming.

Incredibly hard, constantly moving, and packed with some of the most unusual aliens we'd seen up to that time, *Contra*, *Super Contra*, and *Contra III: The Alien Wars* were all forbearers of what was to come. The absolute precursor to what would eventually transform a dominating action genre into something bigger, badder, and better than we ever imagined. Unfortunately, the Contra series slowly faded away into the shadows, with a lackluster PSOne follow-up and rumors of Konami shelving the franchise permanently.

Luckily, things have worked out for the better, and the intense gun blasting of yesteryear is making a bona fide comeback. In *Shattered Soldier*, Konami has returned to its roots and successfully recaptured the same spirit and feeling that surrounded the best of the series, The Alien Wars.

Reverting back to just a few buttons to control your hero (jump, shoot, cycle, and charge) the straightforward "kill or be killed" mentality turns out to be quite refreshing in this day and age of overcomplicated battle simulations and 73-key configurations. In the two levels that we've managed to thoroughly demo so far, it's entirely old school. With flying insect soldiers, gigantic sprinting mechas, and the same spread shot and flamethrowers we grew up with.

The final version will plenty more than that, with an undisclosed amount of stages, monsters, and bosses that Konami promises will blow your mind. Simple, fun, and easy to pickup, there are few approaching games that IGN is looking forward too more. Come November, we'll find out if it can live up to our expectations.

-- Jeremy Dunham ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Konami
Developer ::	Konami
Genre ::	Action
Number of Players ::	2
Release Date ::	November 2002

PlayStation 2 :: Preview

MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2

No-footed hang-ten to whiplash to backside undertaker? Wow...

Flatland is the most esoteric of the four main disciplines of freestyle BMX, the art of performing stunts with nothing but a bike and a wide-open space. If you've seen it on television, you've probably wondered what everyone does -- how on earth do they do that? In reality, the answer is years of practice and dedication, but in *Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2*, it's quite simple. Manual, double-tap right with the square button, and bingo, it's a backside undertaker.

The addition of flatland tricks is by far the most interesting quality *Mat Hoffman 2* possesses in comparison to the rest of the extreme-sports market. For the most part, it feels similar to its cousins in the Activision 02 lineup, although it's a more tightly designed

Rolling Lung Spin to Stick B
Nose Manual

Peg Manual to Backside Undertaker
Lung Spin

package than its predecessor -- the trick selection is broader, and level designs show much more care and thought. But it's remarkable how much fun there is to be had just tinkering around on flat ground. The selection of flatland tricks ranges from raw basics to complex linking combos, and all of them are beautifully animated. The aforementioned undertaker link absolutely has to be seen to be believed.

The layout of *Mat Hoffman 2*'s goal progression may turn out to be a bit disappointing, though. *Tony Hawk 3* favored a large and loose selection of tasks for each level, so you rarely got stuck on a single goal. It was always possible to head for another level or work on a different task. *Mat Hoffman 2*, on the other hand, is structured such that a single goal can become a hindrance. Tasks are delivered four at a time in three different stages -- amateur, semi-pro, and pro -- but you can't work on the harder tasks until you finish the easier ones, and unlocking a new level means finishing at least two-thirds of the existing tasks. It seems that it would be better to have all three sets available at once, instead of just four at a time. Advanced players don't need to be led by the nose, especially once they've made it to later levels, and it would give them more to do during a run.

On the other hand, those players should enjoy the return of the *Tony Hawk 2*-style gap checklist, which catalogs your progress through the myriad hidden transfers in every level. Rainbow Studios has shown real attention to detail in that and other areas -- the bike modeling, for example, is a cut well above what we've seen in earlier BMX games. Quibbles aside, this should get a solid thumbs-up from fans of the sport next month, while BMX newbies will get a much-needed introduction to the wonders of flatland.
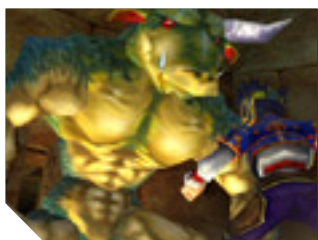
-- David Smith ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Activision
Developer ::	Rainbow Studios
Genre ::	Extreme Sports
Number of Players ::	2
Release Date ::	August 2002

PlayStation 2 :: Preview
GRANDIA XTREME
An RPG that doesn't beat around the bush -- rather rare these days.

Nowadays, it's popular for an RPG to start off slow. *Final Fantasy X* begins with hours of prologue. *Xenosaga* barely lets you touch the controls for what seems like ages. There's nothing wrong with that -- I could stare at the cutscenes in *Xenosaga* for hours -- but it's nice to see that an alternative to the trend exists as well. *Grandia Xtreme*, following Game Arts' preference for putting the emphasis on gameplay, dives into the adventure with hardly any preliminaries. One moment, our hero is relaxing at home. Five minutes later, he's press-ganged into the army, hauled off to war, and exploring dungeons at a moment's notice. If you've ever complained about the cutscenes in a Final Fantasy, here is the game for you.

In general, Game Arts' first proper outing on PlayStation 2 (since we'd prefer to forget the lackluster port of *Grandia II*) shows the developer clearly playing to its strengths. The Grandia and Lunar series have been carried in part by their memorable characters, but not necessarily by complex narrative -- the real fun has been delving into the dungeons and enjoying their particular twist on active-time combat. *Grandia Xtreme* delivers plenty of that, with a combat system that's still one of the best ever devised.

In comparison to *Grandia II*, combat seems to have undergone mainly superficial changes, such as details in the GUI. The initiative meter is now a circle, but that doesn't change its function -- it just takes up less space. The interplay of initiative and 3D positioning is still smoothly executed, seeming to provide nearly transparent dimensions of strategy when it comes to applying area-effect spells and combination attacks. The auto-battle mode is also surprisingly competent when it comes to using the full range of character abilities, and offers several settings for different strategies in combat.

Indeed, *Grandia Xtreme* almost makes one wonder what's changed since *Grandia II*. A new character designer replaces Yushi Kanoe, but a recognizable thread links the visual designs of all three Grandia games -- there's a clear lineage in the supporting cast, for example, between the military that kidnaps our new hero Evann and the thugs that plagued Justin and company in the first game. Unfortunately, there's no Mio, but as always, you can't have everything.

In the future, we'll see how things shape up in the long term, since reports indicate that *Xtreme*'s emphasis on dungeon-crawling gets awfully heavy. Enix of America's translation effort is looking good, though, with some smart script decisions -- some of the rawer language is left

untouched, and things are pretty readable in draft form. We haven't heard the English voices yet, but keep a good thought on that score and look forward to further updates.
-- David Smith ■

Details ::

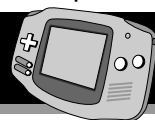|	
Publisher ::	Enix
Developer ::	Game Arts
Genre ::	RPG
Number of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	September 2002

Craig Harris

This Month in GBA ::

As I write this, I'm flying more than 30,000 feet over the Rocky Mountains and heading across the country to get the heck away from the industry for a while. But it's the flight itself that makes me appreciate the handheld market more than ever.

The flight from San Francisco to Philadelphia is about five hours long. Sitting in one place for five hours is not what I consider fun, and I believe that other people agree with me. In several seats, I see both kids and adults whipping out their Game Boy systems to pass the time.

The best thing about the flight: the overhead lights. These things illuminate the GBA screen like nobody's business. It's a shame that there's no way of yanking the suckers from the plane's ceiling. I'd love to install one at home.

For more GBA news, reviews, previews, and more, visit **http://gba.ign.com.**

Featured Preview ::

Also In This Issue ::
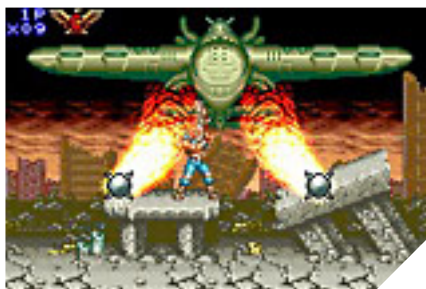
Preview: Contra Advance
Konami sets out to recreate the fun of the SNES classic on Nintendo's handheld.

Preview: Castlevania: HoD
The classic Dracula series continues to advance on GBA.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: e-Reader

2 :: Game & Watch e-Card

3 :: Mario Party e-Card

4 :: Animal Crossing e-Card

5 :: Pokémon e-Card

Office Abuse ::
Thank God this flight isn't westbound. They're showing *Crossroads* as the in-flight movie in that direction.

Game Boy Advance :: Preview

SUPER GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

Make sure you've got your armor on securely – this is one of the toughest games ever made.

I don't know if you have ever played the original *Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts* on the Super NES about a decade ago, or if you have if you remember just how flippin' difficult the game actually was. Regardless, if you've played through it already or are a *Ghouls 'n Ghosts* veteran, then be prepared for one of the (if not the most) difficult games ever designed for any system, because it's being recreated for play on the Game Boy Advance this fall.

Super Ghouls & Ghosts puts players in the role of a knight named Arthur, out to rescue his fair maiden who has been captured by an army of demons. Arthur will have to traverse the death-infested land to gain access to the tower she's kept in. Arthur can jump and climb ladders, but he can also throw weapons such as daggers, javelins, axes, and fireballs.

Because of the limited cartridge sizes of the past, games didn't have animated cut-scenes, voice narration, and full-motion video to make games seem longer than they were. No, they depended solely on the level designs and the challenge of the gameplay. And when *Super Ghost 'n Goblins* hit the scene more than ten years ago, players really got their money's worth. Levels were huge, detailed, filled with special effects...and hard as hell. If you could beat this game in one sitting, then you were a true gaming hero.

The Game Boy Advance version will be two games in one -- kind of. It will be a direct port of the Super NES game, featuring all of the levels of the original game. The second game will be a "rearranged" mode, interspersing new levels between the ported levels. These new areas will be based upon other games in the series, including the NES *Ghost 'n Goblins* and the Genesis/Arcade *Ghouls 'n Ghosts*. The game's difficulty will remain intact, but to make the GBA title "portable" friendly, Capcom has included a cartridge save so that gamers can take a break and record their progress in the middle of the adventure. This is the first Ghouls 'n Ghosts game to do this. Thank you, Capcom.

Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts will be creeping its way to stores this October. – *Craig Harris* ∎

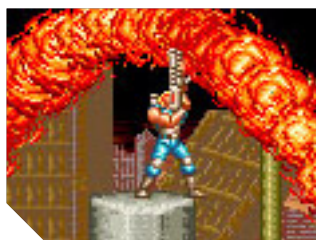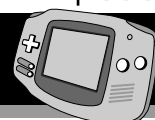

Details ::

Publisher ::	Capcom
Developer ::	Capcom
# of Players ::	1
Genre ::	Action
Release Date ::	September 2002

Game Boy Advance :: Preview
CONTRA ADVANCE
Konami sets out to recreate the fun of the SNES classic on Nintendo's handheld.

While Konami's off continuously updating its Castlevania series for the Game Boy Advance, another team at the Japanese studio is busy bringing one of the company's classic SNES games to life on the handheld. *Contra Advance*, when it's completed for release this holiday season, will be a near-direct port of the Super NES design, *Contra III*.

Like the original, players take control of the gun-toting soldiers, running through alien-invaded wasteland on Earth, blowing away the scum with everything you've got. You'll have to be both quick on the trigger and smart in the head, since you'll have to learn the attack patterns of the enemies that come swarming in from all sides. Two players will be able to cooperate in the levels, blasting the baddies with double the firepower. You'll just need another system and link cable to take advantage of this feature.

We say "near-direct," because we understand that Konami isn't incorporating all of the levels from the Super NES game. Unfortunately, the top-down rotating levels don't look like they'll make the cut. Whether this is a technical issue or a decision based upon gameplay, we'll never know. But in their place will be several new levels of action, as well as others lifted out of the Contra game released on the Genesis system (with updated graphics, of course). And even though the overhead levels were *Contra III*'s "ooh-neat" factor, the remaining levels are sure to have enough GBA special effects to keep the adrenaline pumping. Growing aliens, kamikaze aircraft zooming in from the background, and other cool graphic effects will be put to use to keep the energy level high.

Watch for a November release for *Contra Advance* on the GBA. *– Craig Harris* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Konami
Developer ::	Konami
# of Players ::	2
Genre ::	Action
Release Date ::	November 2002

Game Boy Advance :: Preview
CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE
The classic Dracula series continues to advance on GBA.

One of the finest launch titles in the Game Boy Advance library, without a doubt, was Konami's *Castlevania: Circle of the Moon*. Though the game didn't push the envelope in terms of special effects or hardware capabilities, this extension of Konami's Dracula series brought forth an extremely solid gaming experience, giving the franchise appropriate life on the Nintendo handheld.

Just about a year later, Konami's giving the series a second go on the GBA, but this time it's going to give the series an overhaul. Where last year's game was arguably low-key in its use of the Game Boy Advance system abilities, Konami has opened the floodgates of sprite and background effects for the second game on the system, *Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance*. When the game ships this September, you'll get transparent enemies, characters that are constructed of several scaling and rotating sprites, doors that open and close like a 3D object, and massive bosses that fill the screen with their presence.

And even with more attention paid to the "wow" factor, the gameplay of Harmony of Dissonance will remain completely intact, adding new elements to the design established in *Symphony of the Night* and *Circle of the Moon*. Players assume the role of a new vampire slayer in the Belmont line, Juste. As Juste, players must work their way into the evil-overrun castle, using their whip and other weapons to clear out the undead threat while finding the Big Man at the end. Throughout the adventure, you'll earn extra abilities, like a double jump or a slide attack to help you gain access to deeper parts of the castle.

The only real drawback that we've seen is in the game's audio department. In the original *Castlevania: Circle of the Moon*, Konami offered music with great composition that utilized the GBA sound hardware to effective use. While the sequel's music isn't exactly "terrible," it's obvious that the extra attention to graphics had an effect on the audio quality this time around.

Though this Castlevania game has been available in Japan since June 2002, we won't see an English-language version until September. But you will want to see it, that's a given. *– Craig Harris* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Konmai
Developer ::	Konami
# of Players ::	1
Genre ::	Action-adventure
Release Date ::	September 2002

Dan Adams

This Month in PC ::

Well folks, I'm back from Europe and already in the swing of things. It was an amazing trip that taught me never to leave my shoes on if I'm going to put my feet up on train seats when in the Czech Republic, that the Irish really can drink like I've never seen, it isn't just American women that don't like me, French people aren't all smelly and rude, and Canadians have a sad inferiority complex no matter where they are in the world. All the same, it's nice to be back in a comfortably abusive environment where my ego and confidence can be ground down to a fine grain.

Of course, I have some catching up to do with games but have been trying my damndest with GTAIII, Morrowind, Freedom Force, and, of course, WarCraft III, which turned out to be well worth the wait. Of course I've also got some less than fantastic games lurking in my future, as well as long hours, low pay, lack of appreciation, hate mail...God I need a vacation.

For more PC news, reviews, previews, codes and more, visit **http://pc.ign.com.**

Featured Preview ::

Also In This Issue ::

Preview: Moonbase Commander
Stop parenting children and instilling decency into them.
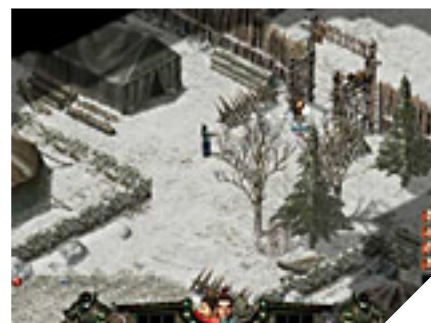
Preview: Prince of Qin
You've played role-playing games before, but have you played them the ancient Chinese way?

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Swimfan!

2 :: More 50-cent half liters of beer.

3 :: Somebody to go to the gym for me.

4 :: Counter-Strike: Condition Zero

5 :: A nice new apartment for cheap.

Office Abuse ::
Even though he works with guys named Hilary and Fran, Dan's still the girliest editor around.

PC :: Preview
MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR
We go hands-on with the follow up to Shogun.

Strategy games get divided into the subcategories of real-time and turn-based. So when *Shogun: Total War* blended the two a couple of years back, all of those gamers out there (including yours truly) that appreciate both sub genres had something to cheer about. And now those same developers are back to give us more loving with their next in the series called *Medieval: Total War*.

While the graphics engine has mainly undergone some minor tweaks to allow for more detail and many more colors, the heart of the improvements for the series lay in the turn-based strategy, which includes everything from the economics to diplomacy. So much has been loaded into this title that it's mad. Everything is deeper and more detailed – from the ratings your nation's leaders receive for everything from 'dread' to 'piety,' to the option to barter off your daughters to cement alliances between important nations. It's been fun exploring the new options available in this portion of the game and any big time strategy gamers that may have found *Shogun*'s turn based sections not quite as filling as they might have hoped will surely walk away feeling nearly stuffed to the brim after a bout with *Medieval*.

After tending to the needs of my people and settling any differences in less violent ways for as long as I could, I eventually found it necessary to beat some sense into one of my senseless neighbors. Real-time battles work the same way as you've gotten used to with *Shogun*, but with more, more, more! *Medieval* brings a ton of history and many of the civilizations from that broad period in time, with many of the unique military units and strengths of each nation. I've had to spend some time with many of the different armies in order to familiarize myself with their strengths and weaknesses, and they all seem to be balanced well. Each type of unit has enough tactical significance; you'll hate to leave anyone out of a battle.

Certain situations also call for different unit types when strategy and tactics combine, as you'll need to stick the right units in the right terrain on the strategic overland map, and then use your well-placed soldiers to their best when the battles begin. Metal clad knights, for example, shouldn't be taken into the Middle Eastern deserts. They'll cook in the heat and lose their stamina fast leaving them seriously vulnerable both in fighting ability and morale.

My experience over the last week with this game has been fantastic. *Medieval* is fast approaching its release and will undoubtedly turn into a new benchmark for serious strategy games to judge themselves by in the future.

– Dan Adams ∎

Details ::

Publisher :: Activision
Developer :: Creative Assembly
Genre :: Strategy
# of Players :: 8
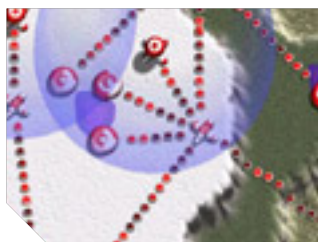**Release Date ::** September 2002

PC :: Preview
MOONBASE COMMANDER

Stop parenting children and instilling decency into them. Instead, purchase the little sweeties a turn-based strategy games and watch as they teach themselves. Roam free...Free!

Take what's widely considered to be the most intellectual, long standing, and hardcore genre in all of gaming. Since managerial simulations and spreadsheet titles don't qualify as actual "games" (they go far, far beyond nerd and into the realm of super dork), it's the turn-based strategy we're looking at. From *Checkers* to *Axis and Allies* to *Battletech*, it's the turn-based strategy that has long enthralled people on and off of the tops of tables. Now comes *Moonbase Commander*... But is it *Stratego* or *Shogun*?

The answer is actually *Star Wars Mystery Date*. The game may not have anything to do with either staple of Americana, but it's catered toward the sci-fi interested loveably young and daft alike. Is home a place that houses a child who likes to play computer games, wants something challenging and different, and absolutely abhors the term "Putt-Putt?" Or, is home that placed filled with UC Berkley students who have a problem deciphering the fundamentals behind the calendar and touchtone phone, but can still always seem to make their drunken and dopey asses to a protest that protests protests? If you answered yes to either of these (preferably only one of the two, because the combination of both would be some kind of unfathomable 10th circle of hell), then *Moonbase Commander* is for you.

Just as soon as little Tommy, the six year old who's way ahead of his time, and Big Suzy, the twenty three year old "nine year planner" with a pierced something and a butterfly tattoo on her back that has sagged into a dying bat, learn how to turn on the computer, they can be taught how to play *Moonbase Commander*. Here's the deal: You own a piece of the moon (cheese and all). It's your job to keep your land and actually develop into Luna's most powerful resident.

Simpler and brighter than most turn-based strategies, *Moonbase Commander* is about exploiting energy pools and out maneuvering rival factions who have the same energy exploiting idea. Commanding the pools on this moon base will involve the use of weapons, surveillance, or shields. It's also like a very elaborate "connect the dots."

The game sports two play modes, four factions, and a terrain editor. Humongous is known far and wide for its child-oriented games. Despite an innocuous outward appearance, those playing *Civilization* and drowning out the background noises of the world like nuclear blasts will not find a fix here, but they will find one for their small sons and daughters. *– Ivan Sulic* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Infogrames
Developer ::	Humongous Entertainment
Genre ::	Turn-Based Strategy
# of Players ::	2
Release Date ::	Fall 2002

pc :: preview

PC :: Preview
PRINCE OF QIN
You've played role-playing games before, but have you played them the ancient Chinese way?

When I think China, I think Ch'in the Merciless, the first emperor who unified all of China and forced his namesake upon it. I also think of one billion people (half of which are still probably toiling away on some wall, or stone army for a grandiose burial, or pyramid, or some damn thing). It's fitting and a tad disturbing, then, that my rash and ignorant stereotypes are to find some substance in Object Software's upcoming *Prince of Qin*. For one, it takes place in the last years of the Qin dynasty. Now that's not Ch'in, but in the book of this ignorant Croat, it's close enough (it is indeed Ch'in -- the spellings are interchangeable). For two, it can support up to 500 players on a dedicated server in multiplayer. Again, for me, a person who often forgets how many moons the Earth has in its orbit, that can equate to a billion. Five hundred dollars makes me a millionaire, after all.

The year is 10 BC. It has actually been some 196 years since the first emperor died. As Fu Su, the new crown prince of Qin, gamers have to rewrite history by forgoing ritual suicide and instead taking some good old-fashioned revenge. It's a classic plot for a classic isometric RPG.

Apparently, the latter years of the rule of Qin were brimming with death and chaos. Wars engulfed the vast lands of China and its entire populace, who, according to the game's official website, consisted of "rare talents, girls of virtuous upbringing, fierce warriors, and even bandits, thieves and drunkards." The latter three are dead ringers for San Franciscans. Perhaps our peoples are not worlds apart after all?

Amidst all this chaos, it'll be up to players to conquer and avenge. Achieving this kind of supreme power will require proper command of a group of five different kinds of heroes. It won't be until the arts of the Paladin, Muscleman, Killer, Wizard, and Sorcerer have been mastered that advancement can come (now those are some to-the-point character classes). The protagonist's fighting styles are Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth. Can't understand what the hell is going on? Good, that's what the Chinese are all about! It's what makes their rare talented, drunk and virtuous women so mysterious and sexy. I saw this crappy martial arts movie on TNN, TBS, or some lame Turner network not too long ago that starred Billy Zane (the rich man's Richard Grieco). According to this factual documentary about Chinese life that chronicles the training of some elementally endowed fighters and their quest to stop someone from destroying the world, all this talk of metal and wood is just another way to represent different fighting styles.

It's not all combat, though. The game's storyline, for which RPGs are particularly known for, will include referenced material from a wealth of historical documents. With more than 30 NPCs plucked right out of the annals of history, accurate maps to relate the era, and more than 100 different, separate scenes to represent it all (a scene in this sense being something akin to a village, city, field, cave and so on), *Prince of Qin* looks to be quite the promising relatively historically accurate Chinese action RPG of 2002. *– Ivan Sulic* ■

Details ::

Publisher ::	Strategy First
Developer ::	Object Software
Genre ::	RPG
# of Players ::	1-500
Release Date ::	Fall 2002

Mike Wiley

This Month in Entertainment ::

So thirty days have passed since your last fix of Super Paper IGN, as I like to call our little rag. With hope you've been holding up all right. And with hope you've been able to cope without Gear taking over the front page. If you've really been hollering for your dose, then this one should do it.

The whole Entertainment section is aces, of course, but I've put something special together for you digital audio junkies. Instead of two articles, I've taken all my space and dedicated it to one, solid showdown. You'll have to turn the page to see who won what, but let it suffice to say that picking a high-end player will be a *lot* easier in about five minutes - ten if you're a slow reader.

You may also appreciate that this is a return to what the original Gear was all about: A/V toys, gadgets, and things-that-plug-in in general. I'm all for the recent shift to a more gaming oriented focus -- this is IGN.com after all -- but consumer electronics is my real thing. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Over and out.

Now open 24 hours!
http://entertainment.ign.com

Gear Feature ::

Also In This Section ::

Movie Preview: *xXx*
The things he's gonna do for his country...

DVD Preview: *Lord of the Rings...*
LOTR: The Fellowship of the Ring arrives on DVD.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Big-ass hydroponics rig

2 :: DLP Projector

3 :: Gibson ES-335

4 :: New Parker Posey movie

5 :: Triple Optical Mouse

Office Abuse ::
Though there's only one editor on the site, Mike consistenly wins the Ugliest Gear Editor Award.

entertainment :: *gear*

iPod VS Nomad

GEAR :: FEATURE ▷/❙❙   ■   ❙◁◁   ▷▷❙

Which jukebox is right for you?
Find out as the top two contenders go head-to-head.

I get asked, "Which one should I buy" every day. Though I don't think any one reviewer's opinion should be the final word, I am usually willing to make the call. If people want to put all their eggs in my basket, well that's their business. And if there's one question I get more than any other, it's for advice regarding MP3 players, often jukebox models. For a while it was easy: If you could afford it, then buy the Nomad Jukebox 3. However, now that XPlay will make the iPod a PC-friendly device there's some real competition for the NJB3. And so here we are.

You SONICblue fans might find this comparison incomplete. I have long loved the Rio line of MP3 portables, and still recommend the RioVolt SP250 highly, but the Riot is simply no match for these two heavyweights. Praise the software as you will, but the hardware just doesn't cut it.

Enjoy.

DESIGN
The iPod has five buttons and a beautifully designed scroll dial. These six simple controls offer the fastest and most intuitive access to your music that you'll find on *any* portable player, regardless of size or budget. The iPod also has the slickest design in the land. The only downside is that the chrome back gets easily scratched very easily. That, of course, isn't much of a downside.

The NJB3, by contrast, has twelve buttons and a scroll wheel. The huge number of options makes more controls necessary, but in terms of design the NJB3 is busy and somewhat confusing, at least while you get used to the control system. That's not to say that I don't like the look and layout of the

NJB3, but compared to the iPod, it's clunky and unfriendly.
– **Winner: iPod**

FEATURES
I appreciate Apple's do-one-thing-and-do-it-perfectly approach, but the iPod is thin on features by any measure. Thankfully, a firmware upgrade added a few much needed features (EQ settings and a handy address book), but it's still a bit *too* simple.

This here contest is what you call a landslide. The NJB3 provides a feature list that is as rich as you'll find anywhere. What does it have that the iPod doesn't? Bigger drive options, MP3 and WAV recording, FireWire *and* USB (USB 2.0 would have been nice, though), analog and digital lines in, two lines out, an IR port for a (future) remote, a port for a (future) wired remote, scads of EQ and sound settings, the ability to transfer songs form the jukebox *to* a computer, and an extra battery compartment. And before you say that you can't use the NJB3 with a Mac, know that this support will be available this month.

Most importantly, as these are audio components, the NJB3 simply sounds better than the iPod. Creative installed a more powerful amp, and the NJB3 has an extremely high signal-to-noise ratio, which means that you can push it hard while maintaining a very clean signal.

Both players use Lithium-Polymer batteries, but the NJB3's additional slot provides for a whopping 20+ hours of playback.
– **Winner: Nomad**

iPod VS Nomad

PORTABILITY

Apple opted for an extremely thin hard drive, which makes the iPod a much smaller and lighter device. When you see pictures of the iPod and NJB3 next to one another, they hardly look as if they're in the same category. And if it's any indication, I almost always use my iPod if I want to walk about with music.

The NJB3 is a good deal smaller than the original Nomad Jukebox, but is still just barely portable. You can fit it into a jacket pocket and forget it's there, but there's no way anyone could say it's even remotely as portable as the iPod.

– Winner: iPod

CAPACITY

When the iPod launched, it was available with a 5B hard drive. Shortly thereafter, Apple released a 10GB version for an extra hundred dollars. While this is plenty of room for your average consumer, MP3 fanatics look for as much storage as possible. And since these models can double as generic hard drives, more is definitely better. The NJB3 was initially available with a 20GB drive. As if doubling Apple's best effort wasn't enough, a 40GB version will start shipping this summer. Nothing like copying your entire C drive to your portable. Not that you would, but (most of) you could.

– Winner: Nomad

VALUE

The 5GB iPod will set you back $399.00. For the 10GB version expect to tack on an extra hundred. With Apple you're paying for slick design and compact form.

The 20GB NJB3 will set you back $399.99. For the 40GB version expect to tack on an extra hundred. Here, however, you're paying not only for the extra drive space, but also for a whole slew of features that the iPod simply doesn't offer.

I don't think that the iPod is a *bad* value, and I'm as charmed by it as the next person, but the NJB3 provides extreme flexibility and awesome storage for the same money.

– Winner: Nomad

OVERALL

Count-up the winning categories and you'll see that the Nomad Jukebox 3 should take the title. However, it's not so simple. I use both players quite often, but use each for specific applications. Basically, I use my iPod when I'm out and about and need something highly portable. I use my NJB3 at my desk, to make recordings, and when I want to share files between my work and home computers.

After much consideration I have arrived at the (unfortunate) conclusion that there simply is no all-out winner. Instead, I recommend you really think about what you need in a player. If, for example, you have a long daily commute and need something highly portable, then the iPod will do you right and then some. If, however, you want something with a lot of extras and don't plan on carrying it around all the time, then the Nomad is the way to go. Remember that I am speaking relatively; the NJB3 is still a portable, but not quite *as* portable.

Now go break those piggybanks.

– Mike Wiley, IGN Gear ∎

entertainment :: dvd

DVD :: Preview
THE LORD OF THE RINGS:
THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING ::

One of the best movies of 2001 arrives on DVD in August in the form of a two-disc set complete with anamorphic widescreen video, Dolby Digital 5.1 EX audio, and the following special features:

DISC FEATURES ::

• Three behind-the-scenes featurettes:
   -"Welcome to Middle-earth" (an in-store special shown by Houghton Mifflin)
   -"The Quest for the Ring" (30-minute special originally shown on the FOX Network)
   -"A Passage to Middle-earth" (60-minute special originally shown on the SCI-FI Channel)

• 15 featurettes originally created for lordoftherings.net These take you deep inside Middle Earth and include interviews with cast members Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, Liv Tyler as well as members of the crew. Each one originally was shown as a streaming video or a quicktime file, so now you have them in the form of high-quality video.

• Exclusive 10-minute behind-the-scenes preview of the next The Lord of the Rings theatrical release, The Two Towers

• Enya's "May It Be" music video

• An inside look at the Special Extended DVD Edition of The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring that streets on November 12, 2002

• Preview of Electronic Arts' video game, The Two Towers

• 3D Animated Menus

• DVD-ROM features that lead you to exclusive online content

DVD Info ::

Price :: $25.95

Release :: August 6, 2002

DVD :: Preview
STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KAHN ::

The film that is known as the best of all ten Star Trek movies sees a new DVD release soon, and it will include the legendary 116-minute "director's cut" of the film as opposed to the original theatrical version. In addition to the longer cut, the two-disc set will also sport a new anamorphic widescreen transfer, Dolby 5.1 audio, and a whole bunch of cool special features:

DISC ONE ::

• Audio Commentary by director Nicholas Meyer

• Text commentary by Trek uber-guru Michael Okuda

DISC TWO ::

• "The Captain's Log," featuring all-new interviews with Nicholas Meyer, William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, Ricardo Montalban, and Harve Bennett

• "Designing Khan," with more interviews including Meye, Bennett, graphic designer Lee Cole, costume designer Robert Fletcher, production designer Joe Jennings, as well as comparisons between Star Trek I and II

• "The Visual Effects of Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan" highlights the effects designers

• Interviews from 1982

• Interviews with Trek novelists Julia Ecklar and Greg Cox

• Trailers

• Storyboard Archives

DVD Info ::

Price :: $29.99

Release :: August 6, 2002

entertainment :: *movies*

FilmForce Movie :: Preview

xXx

The things he's gonna do for his country...

xXx reunites Vin Diesel with the director (Rob Cohen) and the producer (Neal H. Moritz) of last summer's urban racing mega-hit *The Fast and the Furious*. In this high-octane, action-packed espionage thrill ride from Sony and Revolution Studios, Diesel stars as Xander "xXx" Cage – a new breed of secret agent.

Xander Cage is a notorious underground thrill seeker who, until now, has been deemed untouchable by the law. With X's back up against the wall, the National Security Agency's Agent Gibbons (Samuel L. Jackson) offers him a "get out of jail free card" if he will cooperate with the government and infiltrate an underground Russian crime ring.

Betting xXx can succeed where other conventional spies have failed, Gibbons sends him to enter this world of crime undetected, using his natural athletic prowess (X is a former extreme sports athlete) and a whole lot of attitude. Enlisted for a dangerous covert mission, he must combat a clever, organized, and ruthless enemy far beyond the scope of his experience. The fate of the world may rest in his hands.

Italian actress Asia Argento plays X's babe in the film, Yelena. She is the daughter of famed Italian horror director Dario Argento – Asia has become an accomplished director herself in recent years. She hasn't done a whole lot of acting work in the States, but this flick should definitely put her on the Hollywood radar.

The baddie is played by Marton Csokas. You might not know his name, but you would probably know his face. Marton played Celeborn, Lord of the Elves, in *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*.

This film will also boast a pretty high-octane soundtrack. Rapper-turned-actress Eve makes an appearance in the film – don't be surprised if she shows up on the soundtrack. Also, German-Industrial rockers Rammstein will be featured, along with electronica act Orbital.

I've got pretty high hopes for this flick! The studio, apparently, does too. They've already given the greenlight for a sequel that's tentatively set for a Summer or Christmas 2004 release.

xXx has been rated PG-13 by the MPAA for violence, non-stop action sequences (sounds cool!), sensuality, drug content and language. *– Brian Linder* ■

Movie Info ::

Genre :: Action Adventure

Rating :: PG-13

Release Date :: August 9, 2002

Starring :: Vin Diesel, Samuel L. Jackson

Director :: Rob Cohen

entertainment :: *movies*

FilmForce Movie :: Preview

SIGNS

There's a monster outside my room. Can I have a glass of water?

Mel Gibson stars in M. Night Shyamalan's Signs, the Sixth Sense director's latest flick that's sure to thrill audiences, even if it doesn't have a twist ending. Unfortunately, there's just not much known about this project – the studio and M. Night have kept a pretty tight lid on things. What we do know is that the film is a thriller, set in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The story focuses on the mysterious appearance of a five-hundred-foot design of circles and lines that mysteriously appears in the field of a rural family farm.

Mel Gibson stars as Graham Hess, the family patriarch, who is tested in his journey to find the truth behind the unfolding mystery. Joaquin Phoenix plays Merrill Hess, Graham's brother who is a former minor league baseball star.

The film also stars Patricia Kalember (TV's Sisters) as Gibson's wife, and Cherry Jones (Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood) as a local policewoman. Rory Culkin (yet another Culkin sibling) also stars as one of Gibson's kids and the film introduces Abigail Breslin as Bo Hess, Gibson's little girl. You can bet that little Abigail will be getting a lot of praise for her ultra-understated performance – she's the little girl in the trailer that asks, "There's a monster outside my room, can I have a glass of water?"

Despite being a thriller with a lot of the usual Shyamalan tricks, the film also has some funny moments. The Indian-born director says, "In this film, I'm going to make you laugh before I make you scream." It sounds like Shyamalan is breaking new ground with this flick, for himself and possibly for the entire genre. One viewer who attended a test screening of the flick reports, "It's very funny. With the exception of a couple really jokey parts, the humor is based on the severity of the situation and really helps the audience relate to what's going on. It's very scary... truly unsettling. Your skin crawls more from what is implied than what is shown. It's touching. Ultimately, this is a film about a family that stays together despite all of their problems and the fact that the end of the world may or may not be nigh."

Shyamalan re-teamed with producers Sam Mercer, Frank Marshall, and Kathleen Kennedy for this project. He also produces under his Blinding Edge Pictures banner along with Touchstone Pictures. Signs is rated PG-13 for some frightening moments. *– Brian Linder* ∎

Movie Info ::

Genre :: Thriller

Rating :: PG-13

Release Date :: August 2, 2002

Starring :: Mel Gibson, Joaquin Phoenix

Director :: M. Night Shyamalan

Chris "El Sexo" Carle

This Month in Codes ::

The long, hot summer is in full swing. In between peeling ourselves off the vinyl sofa cover and going to the fridge for another cold one (I'm talking about juice boxes, here), we've been playing games. Good games. And cheating like there's no tomorrow. We'll help you do the same with cheats and hints for *Eternal Darkness*, *WarCraft III*, *Stuntman* and more!

What's more? I'll tell you. *Crazy Taxi*'s back and livin' large on the Xbox with its third installment, *High Roller*. It's time to make some crazy money. Lucky for you, IGN has given this glitzy game a ride and has all kinds of mini-game knowledge to share. Check out the following pages to get the low-down on the toughest crazy skill tests in the game. We break 'em down so you don't have to spend your summer driving your cab into the sea. Instead, you can reap the rewards of beating some of the toughest mini-games around. Pop in the Offspring and let's drive!

For more codes, guides, corpses & more, visit **http://codes.ign.com** or **http://guides.ign.com.**

Featured Guide ::

051 :: **Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller Mini-Games Guide**
Impress your friends with your newfound Crazy skills!

Eternal Darkness (GCN)
Unlock Credits, Unlock Jump to Stage, Unlock Eternal Mode.

WipEout Fusion (PS2)
Unlimited Shields, Weapons, Fast Ships, and more...

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Super Mario Sunshine (GCN)

2 :: Dead to Rights (Xbox)

3 :: Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Xbox)

4 :: Haven: Call of the King (PS2)

5 :: NFL 2K3 (Xbox)

Office Abuse ::
Chris' favorite Jedi is Kit Fisto.

Long live sausage-head!

Eternal Darkness (GCN)

Unlock Credits
Beat game once to unlock the "Credits".

Unlock Jump to Stage
Beat game twice to unlock the stage select option, "Jump to Stage".

Unlock Eternal Mode
Beat game thrice to unlock the "Eternal Mode", basically god mode plus infinite ammo.

Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing (PS2)

Activate Cheat Mode
To activate Cheat Mode, go to the Press Start screen and press SQUARE, CIRCLE, L2, R2. This unlocks all modes, boxers and arenas.

Big Head Mode
To unlock Big Head Mode, go to the Press Start screen and press SQUARE, CIRCLE, UP, DOWN.

Unlock All Fighters
Get Bronze, Silver and Gold belts to unlock every fighter in the game.

Unlock Flat Mode
To unlock Flat Mode, go to the Press Start screen and press DOWN, UP, CIRCLE, SQUARE.

Unlock Mike Tyson Challenge
Beat Tyson and earn the gold belt to unlock the Mike Tyson Challenge.

Unlock New Boxer Textures
To unlock new boxer skins, go to the Press Start screen and press L1, R1, X, X, TRIANGLE, X.

Unlock Small Head Mode
To unlock Small Head Mode, go to the Press Start screen and press SQUARE, CIRCLE, DOWN, UP.

Unlock Super Mutant Mode
To unlock Super Mutant Mode, go to the Press Start screen and press SQUARE, LEFT, UP, TRIANGLE.

Stuntman (PS2)

Unlock All Cars
To unlock all cars, enter "ChUmP" as your driver's name at the New Game screen.

Unlock All Toys
To unlock all Toys, enter "MeFf" as your driver's name at the New Game screen.

Unlock All Trailers
To unlock all trailers, enter "FellA" as your driver's name at the New Game screen.

Unlock Everything
To unlock everything, enter "MUssON" as your driver's name.

WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos (PC)

Cheat List
To activate a cheat, press ENTER during gameplay. Then enter the cheat into the pop-up window and press ENTER again. The cheats are as follows:

allyourbasearebelongtous: *Instant win*
greedisgood: *Get 500 wood and gold*
iseedeadpeople: *Full map*
somebodysetusupthebomb: *Instant failure*
thereisnospoon: *Infinite Mana*
whosyourdaddy: *Invincibility, one-hit kills*

WipEout Fusion (PS2)

Features Unlocked
Go to the Extras screen, then go to Cheats. At this screen, move the rows of symbols to form this line: X, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE. This will unlock the features.

Unlimited Shields
Go to the Extras screen, then go to Cheats. At this screen, move the rows of symbols to form this line: TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, SQUARE, SQUARE.

Unlimited Weapons
Go to the Extras screen, then go to Cheats. At this screen, move the rows of symbols to form this line: TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, X, CIRCLE, SQUARE.

WipEout Fusion (PS2) cont.

Unlock Animal Ships
To unlock animal ships, go to the Extras screen, then go to Cheats. At this screen, move the rows of symbols to form this line: TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, X.

Unlock Fast Ships
To unlock fast ships, go to the Extras screen, then go to Cheats. At this screen, move the rows of symbols to form this line: SQUARE, X, X, X, TRIANGLE.

Unlock Mini Ships
To unlock mini ships, go to the Extras screen, then go to Cheats. At this screen, move the rows of symbols to form this line: CIRCLE, SQUARE, SQUARE, X, CIRCLE.

Unlock Retro Ships
To unlock retro ships, go to the Extras screen, then go to Cheats. At this screen, move the rows of symbols to form this line: X, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, X.

Unlock Teams
To unlock new teams, complete the corresponding objectives:

Auricom Team: Complete Franco Gonzalez Challenge with a Gold Medal.
EG-r Team: Complete Alex Reece Challenge with a Gold Medal.
Tigron Team: Complete Sveta Kirovski Challenge with a Gold Medal.
Xios Team: Complete Zala Woolf Challenge with a Gold Medal.
Pirahna Team: Complete Jann Shlaudecker Challenge with a Gold Medal.

The Royal Tenenbaums: Criterion Collection (DVD)

Two hidden clips – *Submitted by: Suavecito2168*
Both the following "Easter Eggs" can be found on "Disc two: supplements.

1st Easter Egg - This one needs no effort to locate as it is given to you once the "Main Menu Screen" appears. It's the arrow maker just above the "Scrapbook" option. This will take you to a small clip of "Ben Stiller" welcoming you to "The Criterion collection" of the "Royal Tenenbaums".
2nd Easter Egg - From the "Main Menu Screen" select the "Scrapbook option". At the next screen go to the "Storyboards" option and push "Down", to have an arrow marker point to the Dalmation mouse. This will take you to a clip of "Bill Murray" being funny.

Pearl Harbor: Vista Series (DVD)

Ten-minute wrap party blooper reel
The blooper reel is hidden on Disc Two. Go to the Special Features and highlight the Faith Hill music video and press right until a Star appears. Then press enter to view the funnies.

Mini-Games Guide
Impress your friends with your newfound Crazy skills!

Welcome to the craziest guide on the planet. Having trouble scoring? Fear not, IGN is here to teach you all the tricks and shortcuts so you can make mad money driving all sorts of fools around three big cities. Don't let those Crazy X mini-games drive you to an early grave, come on in and learn the tricks to beat each of the twenty-five mini-games. Not only will we teach you important skills for the job market (should you ever get a job as a cabbie), but we'll make certain you pass Crazy X with flying colors. So, shut up and move your butt! It's time for some *Crrrrazy Taxi*!

Before you can go in and bust out some mini-game glory, there are skills you'll need to learn. Without mastery of these skills, Crazy X will own you. And you don't want to be owned, do you? Of course not, fool! First, let's take a quick glance at the old Crazy X board, in case you don't know exactly how *Crazy Taxi* mini-games work.

Crazy X is divided into four tiers of difficulty. The mini-games are placed together to look like a big ol' X and as you complete earlier tasks, you'll work your way deeper and deeper till you hit the heart of X for the big finale. The challenges are identified with the tier number, followed by the letter of the challenge. So you have Crazy X 1-A, 2-C, etc. Though you will unlock some higher-tiered games before finishing a lower tier, it's best to finish off an entire row before moving on to more difficult territory. Here's how the tier's break down:

Tier 1

Twelve challenges, most of which aren't too tough to pass. These are meant to teach the various skills needed to succeed as a taxi driver in the world of *Crazy Taxi 3*.

Tier 2

Ten challenges, which are much tougher than the first tier. You'll need to apply everything you learned in the first tier here. If you don't have skill, you won't get past this tier.

Tier 3

Just two challenges, but they are both doozies. Harkening back to final mini-game challenges of Taxis past, both of these will test your entire repertoire.

Tier 4

The final challenge and that's all we'll say.

To beat Crazy X, you'll need some crazy skills. Learn these moves on the streets of Glitter Oasis, West Coast, or Small Apple before jumping into Crazy X. Pick a 10-minute ride and forget about customers as you perfect your talent. Once you can pull off every move with ease, it's time to hop on over to the Crazy X board and do some serious driving.

CRAZY DASH
Press B and Right Trigger at same time
The plain Jane, most basic move in the game. If you can't get the hang of the Crazy Dash then you are:
   A) A total loser
   - *and* -
   B) Not worthy of the *Crazy Taxi*
You'll use the Crazy Dash more than anything else in the game and it will kill your thumb, so be prepared for some painful, yet enjoyable, evenings.

   To perform a Crazy Dash, briefly release the accelerator (Right Trigger) then hit drive (B) and accelerate at the same instance. The result is a momentary boost in speed. You don't have to fully release the accelerator or wait three seconds before performing a Crazy Dash. Do it quickly. Release slightly, then hit drive and accelerate at the same instant for a smooth boost in speed. There is no Crazy Meter or Crazy Juice Bar to content with, so use the Crazy Dash as often as you like.

CRAZY BACKDASH
Press A and Right Trigger at the same time
Once you've learned the Crazy Dash, the Backdash will be no problem. Just hit reverse (A) and accelerate (Right Trigger) and you'll speed backwards. Generally this is needed when you've screwed up another move and driven yourself into a wall or some other obstruction and need to get back on the proper path in a hurry.

CRAZY STOP
Press A and Left Trigger simultaneously
Another crucial skill to learn, this move will stop you on a dime, if done properly. You'll want to use this when you're speeding up to a customer and want to make a sudden stop. And it's also quite useful when dropping one of those shlubs off.

CRAZY DRIFT
Roll thumb from A to B and press Left Thumbstick left or right
It may be a bit tough to pick up at first, but a majority of the mini-games require deft skill in the Crazy Drift. To perform a drift, you'll need to hit reverse (A) and then immediately hit drive (B). It's best to roll your thumb from A to B. At the same time, you'll want to steer left or right, depending on which way you want to power slide. The longer you hold the thumbstick, the more you will slide. You can do a 180 this way, or even a 360 if you want to make your customer puke (note: customer will not actually puke, sorry).

CRAZY DRIFT STOP
Crazy Drift followed by a Crazy Stop
As if learning one trick wasn't enough, sometimes you'll need to combine two crazy tricks into one. A Crazy Drift Stop is necessary when you are picking up or dropping off a customer and want to be facing a different direction. Start by performing a Crazy Drift, then release the thumbstick and hit reverse (A) and brake (Left Trigger). Not only will you have drifted, but you'll stop... even mid-air. Sweet, isn't it?

CRAZY JUMP
Press Y
Want hops? You got hops! Press the Y button to jump. This is especially helpful to get over traffic, onto rooftops, or at the end of a ramp to give yourself some extra bounce.

CRAZY JUMP DASH
Perform a Crazy Jump then press A,
then perform a Crazy Dash
It may not seem like much, but the Crazy Jump Dash will give you a solid boost the minute your tires touch the ground following a Crazy Jump. Once you are airborne, but your car in reverse (B). A second before you touch the ground, do a Crazy Dash (B + Right Trigger). You'll hit the ground running.

CRAZY DRIFT JUMP
Perform a Crazy Drift and press Y
This will get you through several of the mini-games. To perform properly, timing is everything. That's right baby, you gotta feel the rhythm of the night if you wanna pull off the Crazy Drift Jump. To do this properly, hit Y the moment you start a Crazy Drift. You can also jump first and then perform a Crazy Drift in the air, but you won't actually drift until you hit the ground, which can eat up clock and cause you to drift too much. One technique that may make the Crazy Drift Jump easier for you, is to roll your thumb from A to B to Y in one quick motion, using the thumbstick to turn you into the drift. This will get you airborne the instant you start the Drift.

CRAZY LIMIT CUT
Press A, B, and Right Trigger at the same time
Every cab has its maximum speed, but you can top that by performing a Crazy Limit Cut. When you're on a straightaway and want to feel a few extra Gs, release the trigger and then hit reverse (A), drive (B), and accelerate (Right Trigger) simultaneously. The result is a bigger boost than you can possibly get from a Crazy Dash.

CRAZY START
Perform a Crazy Dash just as the mini-game starts
It helps to get out of the gate with a bang. Each mini-game begins with a "Ready-Go" countdown. Practice your timing so that you can pull off a Crazy Dash a second after the announcer says "Ready," but before he says "Go." It may take a few tries to get this down, but do it right and you'll begin with a big burst of speed, which could be the difference in completing a task.

Yes, this is a big list of skills you need and Crazy X will test your knowledge harder than a tenth grade math teacher. But we've got faith in you. After all, you're learning from the best: us. So strap on your safety belt (because you will need it), put on your favorite Offspring song (if it's possible to have a favorite), and dive right into the Crazy X. It's waiting for you...don't fear it.

1-A CRAZY JUMP

Who could have left this big ramp here? Apparently the Crazy gods want someone to take flight and that's what you'll have to do to complete the Crazy Jump. This is pretty easy to pull off. Begin the mission with a Crazy Start to get a good boost, then Crazy Dash at least two more times. When the front of the cab reaches the edge of the ramp, press Y to get some lift from the Crazy Jump and then hang on to your butt. If you want, you can do some Crazy Dashes in the air, though they won't really add much, if anything, to the total distance. Once you land, get off your sofa and do a little Crazy Dance. You've just passed the first of twenty-five mini-games.

1-B CRAZY HOME-RUN

Ah, summer is upon us and nothing says summer like girls in bikinis...err, I mean baseball. Take your taxi out to the diamond and hit a home run! This can be tricky if you aren't skilled at the Crazy Start. You need a strong initial boost to get you close to home plate, then jump just as the ball reaches your cab and knock it at least 450 meters. The timing shouldn't be too tough, as long as you get that Crazy Start.

1-C CRAZY BALL

Disco is not dead! And *Crazy Taxi* proves it with a disco ball breaking frenzy. Do your best Travolta impression (note to children: He was in a very famous disco movie) and Crazy Drift across the dance floor. The big disco ball hovering over the dance floor doesn't move, so it's just a big stationary target. You'll need to smash it 10 times within 60 seconds. Race towards the ball and hit Y when it's in front of you to smash it. As you're flying through the air, perform a Crazy Drift. The minute you land your car will swerve and put you back in position for another run. Easy enough to be stayin' alive.

1-D CRAZY TORNADO

Remember that movie Twister? Yeah, me neither. But you could have flashbacks playing this mission as a crazy tornado is raining down cars all over the place. Remember the taxi driver's motto: "Neither rain, nor

sleet, nor falling cars shall keep me from earning dough." You have sixty seconds to get the mascot to his destination. All you have to worry about is cars falling in your path. Stay as straight as possible, because the plateau narrows on both sides about halfway through the run. Most cars you can actually knock out of your path just by running into them, but if a cluster of cars falls in front of you, you'll need to hit Y to jump over them. Zig and zag around the cars, continually using the Crazy Dash, but try and keep as straight a line as possible. Once you reach the destination, perform a Crazy Stop to win valuable cash prizes. (Note: no actual cash prizes will be awarded.)

1-E CRAZY BALLOONS

Phew, fortunately it's not 99 red balloons you need to pop. Sega's taking it a little easy on the kids these days, requiring you to pop just a mere fifteen big orange and yellow balloons. Scary thing is, this is exactly what my prom looked like, taxi and all. You've got one minute and twenty seconds to complete the task, which is plenty of time. Crazy Dash towards the first balloon in sight, jump if you must (a few of the balloons hover in the air) and then Crazy Drift to quickly turn yourself around. Until you get down to the last one or two balloons, you'll almost always come out of a Drift facing one of the big fat balloons.

1-F CRAZY FOOTBALL

It's time to take it to the house. It seems this football player you're escorting can't make it to the endzone on his own talent, so be like George Bush Sr. and let the kid ride your coattails, err, in your cab. All that's standing in your way is a buttload of angry drivers. That sure looks like more than eleven men on the field, but I don't hear the ref's whistle so I guess you'll just have to play on. You've got 40 seconds to navigate 100 yards are deadly gridiron.

Cars will try to stop you in one of two ways. Either they'll surround you, making it impossible to move, or they'll bump you out of the sideline, in which case you fail. At the start, only a wave of small compact cars will come at you. These are easy to avoid or even hurdle with the Crazy Jump. Next come the pick-up trucks and sedans, quickly followed by some semis and then even two-decker buses. The final showdown is like that Spielberg movie Duel, only instead of one crazed trucker, you've got to face off against about ten.

The best way to win Crazy Football is to stay on the ground as much as possible and swerve from one end of the field to the next. Head straight towards the first wave of little cars and then swerve right to avoid them. Then swerve sharply left as the second wave approaches. This long weave works most of the time, though you may have to do a Crazy Jump on the last two waves. It's a judgment call, but it's best to save the jump and use it only when absolutely necessary, because once you are in the air, you lose speed and give up ground to your opposition. Once in the end zone, yank the e-brake and pull a Crazy Stop.

1-G CRAZY UFOs

Someone's been leaving bizarre circles in your crops! It's time to take some vengeance to the annoying green men who've been turning all your cows inside out. Drive down this quiet field and take out those pesky martians. Hit 'em hard and send their little green arses back to outer space. You've got a full minute to take out the pesky invaders (who actually seem to be quietly minding their own business). Drive down the hillside, aiming for each

of the nine slowly moving UFOs. When you're upon one, perform a Crazy Jump to knock it out of the stratosphere. If you misjudge a jump and miss a UFO, don't bother turning around. Just restart the level and try again. None of this is very tricky and you should be able to get it within three tries. Unless you totally suck. And if you do, well, lie to your friends and pretend it only took three tries.

1-H CRAZY RING

I fell in to a burning ring of fire... No, Johnny Cash doesn't appear in this mission, but his presence can be felt, as you must repeatedly leap through a ring of fire. Don't stress though, this isn't much more than a cheap parlor trick, like the ones your mom used to do back when you were seven and your friends came over for a slumber party. There's a minute-thirty on the clock and you need to get through the ring of fire at least eight times to beat the mission. Crazy Dash towards the ring of flame, Crazy Jump through the hoop, and then perform a Drift while still in the air. When you land you'll pull a 180 and can head back up the ramp. Once up the ramp, do another Crazy Drift to aim yourself back at the flaming ring. Repeat this seven more times and you will defeat the evil flame ring and go on to fame and fortune. (Note: fame and fortune not guaranteed by IGN or Sega.)

1-I CRAZY POLES

Pyramids and poles go together like, uh, peanut butter and gravy. But on this mission they seem the perfect mix. You've got just a minute twenty seconds to deliver eight customers to their poles, uh, destinations. The path is pretty straightforward. Bust out the Crazy Dash to get to a pole quickly, then when you are a few feet from the pole, use your Crazy Drift to smack into the pole and stop your bad self long enough to exchange passengers.

Make sure to hit the brake as well, as occasionally the cab will want to keep moving even after hitting the pole. Because you used the Crazy Drift, you'll be facing the direction of your next passenger. If you're not sure which direction is next, just look at the dirt path. That'll show you the way. Deliver all eight concerned citizens to get a cookie. (Legal disclaimer: Sega reserves the right to refuse cookies to any and all cab drivers.)

1-J CRAZY RAMPS

A jumping cab will never be as much fun as a jumping girl from *DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball*, but it's the next best thing! Launch yourself off the many ramps to get your fare to their destination (why anyone wouldn't just take a bus at this point is beyond us). But be careful, miss-time that leap and you'll be driving cabs in the afterlife. You've got one minute to get the fair to her destination.

Timing of your Crazy Jumps and use of the Crazy Jump Dash are crucial to getting your fare to her destination in time. Take each ramp straight on. Going off at an angle is a sure way to get yourself a big fat FAILURE stamp on your forehead. The best method is to Crazy Dash before reaching the ramp so that the Dash ends just as you hit the bottom of the ramp. Often the Crazy Dash on the ramp can cause weird effects that actually slow down your cab (don't ask us, it's some mystical Egyptian thing). When the front of your cab reaches the end of the ramp, perform a Crazy Jump. To make it in time, you'll need to pull off a Crazy Jump Dash as you land to give you a big speed boost.

Be careful, the last two ramps are especially skinny and the jumps are longer so they must be hit straight on.

When you make it to the green area, show off your Crazy Stop and then down some Courvoisier, 'cause you're the true Ladies Man. Unless you're a girl. Not that there's anything wrong with that.

1-K CRAZY LOGS

It's loooog, it's loooog, it's big, it's heavy, it's wood... No cabbie gets his license without first going through a little log jumping drill. Standard procedure. You may recognize this scene from Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* if you were really drunk when you watched it. Just hop over the logs rolling down the course and get to that goal pronto! It's really as simple as it sounds. The only mistake is jumping too late. Don't wait until the log is upon you or you'll likely hit it, which will cost you valuable time. You want to jump so that the log is just past you when you land. There's a rhythm to the logs, so learn it and you will have no troubles easily hopping over what's rolled down at you. Once at the destination, do a Crazy Stop and then do a jig. You've got 35 seconds to reach the destination.

1-L CRAZY PLATES

This girl's got a date up on the top of a bunch of platforms. Shows you how freaky meeting people online can be! Get her to the top by performing a series of Crazy Drift Hops. With only 40 seconds on the

clock, you'll have to be both quick and skilled with the Crazy Drift Hop. The main thing is to not Hop too soon. Crazy Drift about a car length before the edge, but don't Crazy Jump until the car reaches the edge of the platform. Repeat this procedure until you reach the top where you'll have to yank the brake and perform a Crazy Stop. When the customer gets to the top, she'll give you the best gift any man can get. Money.

2-A CRAZY HOPPER

A man. A cab. A customer. A destination. And shifting platforms in between. Possibly one of the hardest of all the mini-games, the Crazy Hopper is easy once you figure out the timing. With so many sliding platforms, though, it's easy to make a big mistake and end up falling into the void. And if that happens, well, you'll just have to hit retry. Follow our path and you should have little trouble beating this task.

You've got 45 seconds and you'll need every last one of them. Start off with three Crazy Dashes before you reach the first set of shifting platforms. After that, you'll be able to get off one Crazy Dash for each platform. Don't bother trying for more or you'll miss-time a jump. Also important is doing a Crazy Jump Dash each time you reach another platform. This extra speed will be vital.

From the start of the level, veer towards the right. Continue to leap towards the platforms on the far right. You'll hardly need to adjust from a straight line the whole time, which will help conserve time. On the eighth jump, you'll need to steer towards the left to catch the plate. After that, you should be able to make it heading relatively straight.

2-B CRAZY RISE

How do you get a customer up a series of platforms leading to some nosebleed destination? With the crazy drift of course! With 35 seconds on the clock, it's up to you and your Drift skills to get the Rastafarian to his high destination. Crazy Dash like, errr crazy, until you reach the edge of the platform, then Crazy Jump. While in the air, Crazy Drift so that when you land you'll do an

immediate 180. Continue in this manner until you reach the top where, as always, you'll bust a Crazy Stop and drop off your customer.

2-C CRAZY FLOOR

It's one thing to be driving precariously on a thin stretch of winding road. It doesn't help that the floor moves to the left and right, causing you to be pushed one way or the other. Oh, and some fool put a time limit on this mission and everything. Nice going! There's only 50 seconds to navigate this narrow and winding stretch of road, but if you keep your head about you, you'll make it no problem... after like ten tries.

The key is to not get freaked by the moving floor. As long as you're trucking along, it really shouldn't bother you. Just stay towards the center of the track. It's tempting to try and Crazy Jump these moving sections, but that will actually cut down your speed, so stay seated on the straight-aways. Cut corners, however, with the Crazy Jump. You can jump across the first three corners rather easily, so do this to cut down on time.

The fourth corner comprised of white moving floor shouldn't be shortcutted, as it's easy to over or under leap. Instead, perform a Crazy Drift about a half second before the front of your cab reaches the inside corner. Navigate the next few series of quick turns normally,

without the Drift. When you reach the blue left turn, you'll need to bust out another Crazy Drift. It's best to take a bit wider angle on this turn. The very next turn requires a Crazy Drift to the right. Now just follow the remaining path, Crazy Dashing if you are low on time and then Crazy Stop in the green zone. Piece of cake right? Right?

2-D CRAZY CANYON

The Grand Canyon sure is pretty, but this is no time for sightseeing, you've got a customer to deliver! With only thirty seconds, there is no time for mistakes in this level. There are several things that make this run difficult. The road is both narrow and winding. If you should hit the side of the mountain (which is pretty easy to manage), then you'll see a dip in your speed, something that will cost you seconds you can't afford to lose. You'll need to do an excellent job of staying as much in the center track as possible.

From the start, jump over the three immediate gaps, taking a straight line through the canyon road. Follow the quick curve, hanging towards the outside of the path, rather than chance hitting the side of the mountain. There are seven more gaps after that, which can be made rather easily with decent timing. As always, jump just as the front of the car reaches the edge. The final gap requires a brave leap to the plateau destination, using the Crazy Stop to keep from pulling a Thelma & Louise. If you don't use the Crazy Stop, you will bounce off the tiny plateau and into the canyon below. You won't make a cool Wile E. Coyote dust cloud or anything. So your death won't even be cool. Better just to beat the level and try and look cool another time.

2-E CRAZY AIR

It's all about the crazy drift hop as your attempt to leap over watery gaps to get your precious cargo (a person) and their precious commodity (money) to the destination in time (45 seconds). Fail to get them there in time and you get no green. And if you screw up a jump, you'll find yourself swimming in the deep blue sea.

The arrows make for a good marker. Crazy Dash

towards them. When you reach the tip of the arrow, begin your Crazy Drift. Don't Crazy Jump until your car reaches the edge of the ramp. Crazy Jump Dash as you land to get a big boost as you speed towards the next arrow. Keep at this until you reach the green destination where, of course, you Crazy Stop to end your little jumping adventure.

2-F CRAZY BOWLING

No, your passenger is not The Dude, but you are out there bowling. Whoever owns this alley must be one big fella, 'cause these pins are enormous! Time your crazy drifts just right so you can knock down all 70 pins! This is slightly different from the bowling challenge in Crazy Taxi's Crazy Box, but the idea is the same. You want to Crazy Drift into the headpin and hopefully smack down all the pins in one clean motion. You've got one minute, and while that seems like a short time, it's actually more than enough to get this mission completed.

Stay as straight as possible on your approach to each set of pins. About a half second before hitting the head pin dead on, pull a Crazy Drift and let yourself slide for a brief second. Check the indicator in the top right corner. If it says you got a strike, Crazy Dash and move on. If you fail to get a strike on any of the first three sets of pins, restart. You want at least the first half of the job done perfectly to allow for later mistakes.

After the third set of pins, if you have missed one or two, immediately turn around and hit them with a Crazy Drift. Don't head off intent on coming back for them, as there just isn't enough time to make up all that distance. You should be able to complete the objective if you get even just four strikes, so long as you can knock down the straggling pins within five seconds. It may take a few tries, but if you are skilled at the Crazy Drift, you should be able to get this within ten attempts. And remember, The Dude abides.

2-G CRAZY TURN
Dust off your Crazy Drift Jump, it's time to use it again. Let's put 35 seconds on the clock. When performing the Drift Jump, make sure to stay on the inside part of the ramp. Taking a wide angle will add time and here time is your enemy. Like an ex-lover. Super nasty with bad teeth. The path is twisting and the turns alternate left and right. First Crazy Drift Hop right, then left, right, and left again. The last jump is to the big green spot where love and adoration await. (Note: IGN can't say you will ever achieve love or adoration. I mean, just look at you.)

2-H CRAZY INFINITY
You've got 45 seconds to drive the hockey player up the spiral road using the Crazy Drift to corner. Why's he need to get up there? Who knows, who cares? Really, shouldn't this guy be out on the ice high-sticking someone? When you reach a corner in this spiraling road, do a Crazy Drift, but make sure not to make it too sharp you'll go head on into a big glass pillar. You have to be a bit gentler with this Drift than you are in other missions. Limit Cut or Crazy Dash the straight-aways and then do that whole "stop on a dime" thing in the green destination zone.

2-I CRAZY RUSH
Three customers, three destinations. This will test your true taxi skills, as you must stop on a dime to pick up each customer and deliver them quickly to their various destinations. The path for each customer is different and requires a separate approach to be successful. Start

with the karate champ straight ahead of you. Make a slight veer to the right as you approach, because if you come straight on he'll dive out of the way and cost you time. Crazy Stop next to him, as close as you can manage. You should be back in full gear with at least 49 seconds remaining. Shortcut the twist in the road with a Crazy Jump. Crazy Drift Stop in the destination zone with a 180-degree turn. There should be at least 41 seconds on the clock.

Return the way you came, shortcutting your way back. Crazy Drift to the right, and stop for the football player. You should have at least 30 seconds left. Head straight, and Crazy Drift Stop 180-degrees. Drop off the football player and head back the way you came. You need at least 21 seconds for the finale. Crazy Dash to the final customer. Crazy Drift Stop at the last pickup spot. There should be 10 seconds left on the clock.

Head straight and Crazy Dash. When you reach the first rise, Crazy Jump shortcut and then drive to the green destination zone. Crazy Stop and you, my friend, are a winner.

2-J CRAZY ZIGZAG
Guess what? You've got a customer and they need to get somewhere no one else in their right minds would want to go to! And, you have to use your Crazy Dash Hop to make it in time. But time the Hop correctly,

because it's easy to over-jump the next platform and end up swimmin' with the fishes. By now you should have mastered the Crazy Drift Hop or else you'd have quit in frustration. We'll assume you are a master and therefore, this should be a somewhat easy task for you.

You've got 35 seconds to get the basketball player to his favorite picnic spot. Crazy Dash each straightaway and then Crazy Drift Hop about a half second before reaching the checkered edge. Start the Drift a half-second before the checkered edge, and then Hop once you reach that edge. Continue this path till the end and do a little Crazy Stop at the destination zone.

3-A CRAZY ATTACK
It's time for a massive run through the West Coast level from the original *CT*. You've got to race around the redesigned West Coast in just four minutes time. It's not too hard to accomplish, once you've learned the ins and outs of all the new locations in the West Coast. Check out the map below to see the path you must take. You won't see any guiding arrows; you'll just have to trust your path (or follow our map). While you can stray off the path and say, be sneaky and take massive shortcuts, you won't win. If you miss one of the six checkpoints, you are poo outta luck.

Since you've passed the first two tiers, the carriage is available to select from the Crazy X menu. The carriage is insanely fast, but hard to control. Still, the speed will be a great asset in finishing the task at hand.

The path can get a bit confusing, so make sure to check out the map below. Just keep Crazy Dashing like mad and anytime you get airborne perform a Crazy Jump Dash for a big kick of speed. As you hit each checkpoint you'll see how far ahead or off the time you are. Ignore this, because that time is really an optimum time. You can be 20 seconds off the pace, near the fifth checkpoint, and still make it in plenty of time. Just relax, try not to turn too hard (because the control on the carriage is about as bad as can be), and stay as much on the path as possible. You may be able to snag a few quick short cuts here and there, but for the most part you will need to keep to the main road.

3-B CRAZY TOUR
Vegas baby, Vegas. Glitter Oasis, the new city for *CT3*, is a lot like the famed Nevada city. Drive to the forty locations in Vegas in nine minutes, delivery customers at each one. This will be quite tough if you haven't learned the layout of Glitter Oasis. However, it is a great way to get to see the entire city in under nine minutes.

This level must be played to near perfection in order to pass. While the carriage is fast and may help the most, those who find the controls too difficult may want to switch to the bike. The bike is slower than the carriage, but faster than any of the normal cabs and has good control, but it will still be tough to meet this challenge. Expect plenty of blisters. Study the map below. You're most likely going to get lost and lose time when you hit the desert, so you should select a few 10 minute drives in Glitter Oasis to learn the terrain before tackling this difficult mini-game.

Good luck, and hold onto your butt!

4-A
Shhhh! It's a secret! We'll leave this last giant mini-game for you to discover. All we'll say is, it's one horribly difficult mother. Expect some new tips, secrets, and videos in July on guides.ign.com!

– Hilary Goldstein ∎